



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 7 MAR 2022

	International	National	Regional and Local
Events, Opportunities Go to articles	03/07 Day 12 of the Russia invasion 03/07 Russia ruble hits new record low 03/07 Putin wreaking carnage in Ukraine 03/07 Russia offers new limited cease fire 03/07 China 'rock solid' ties Russia: mediator? 03/07 Oil prices soar, stocks plunge: uncertainty 03/07 China lashes US over Quad nations, NKorea 03/06 Day 11 of the Russia invasion 03/06 US, NATO arm Ukraine: air, land 03/06 Russia shells population centers 03/06 Russia intense shelling Mariupol 03/06 US: Russia recruits Syria fighters 03/06 War threatens world's 'breadbasket' 03/06 UN: 1.5M flee Ukraine; cease fire fails 03/06 Moldova ponders: would Russia stop? 03/06 Russia protests grow; police arrest 3,000 03/06 Ukraine troops hold Russia assault at bay 03/06 Ukraine: 20,000 foreign volunteers to fight 03/06 Ukraine negotiator shot dead; Russia spy? 03/06 American Express suspends all operations 03/06 China opposes sanctions; to continue trade 03/06 Covid death toll nears 6M into 3rd year 03/06 China Covid surge despite 'zero tolerance' 03/06 US, Venezuela discuss easing sanctions 03/06 Women's marches gain steam in Pakistan 03/06 NKorea confirms new tests on spy satellite 03/05 Day 10 of the Russia invasion 03/05 Tens of thousands rally for Ukraine 03/05 Russia civil aviation isolation grows 03/05 US: Moscow faltering, Ukraine 'can win' 03/05 Mastercard, Visa halt operations Russia 03/05 Ukraine military adapts tactics, strategy 03/05 Biggest movement of people since WWII 03/05 Fortress Kyiv prepares for Russia attack 03/05 'Desperate plea': send aid, military planes 03/05 Russia state TV reveals Putin's intentions 03/05 Ukraine: Russia fails to respect ceasefire 03/05 Putin: sanctions akin to declaration of war 03/05 Line of succession Ukraine leaders security 03/05 Ukraine, Russia agree: evacuation corridors 03/05 Lviv becomes a vital rear base Ukraine west 03/05 New reality invasion global economy impact 03/05 UK: steep rise people w/long-term illness 03/05 Spain cuts more quarantine requirements 03/05 Developing nations Covid hybrid immunity 03/05 Japan foreign policy more assertive 03/05 China seeks to 'resolve' Taiwan question 03/05 Europe too late cut Russia gas addiction? 03/05 NKorea conducts ninth missile test of year 03/05 Russia demands threaten Iran nuclear deal 03/04 Russia tactics lay waste Ukraine towns 03/04 Ukraine holds off Russia offensive Kyiv 03/04 West unplugs Russia financial systems 03/04 Russia oligarchs in sanctions crosshairs 03/04 Drone enthusiasts sign up to repel Russia 03/04 US, European allies deliver array weapons 03/04 Sanctions: punish Putin, fuel Russia unrest 03/04 Russia targets media outlets: fake news law 03/04 UN: food prices record high in February 03/04 Australia east coast reels from worst floods	03/07 Retirement funds brace for losses 03/07 National Guard follow Pentagon orders? 03/06 Experts urge: prepare for future outbreaks 03/06 Russia invasion; Navy fight China likely? 03/06 War in Ukraine drives up inflation in US 03/06 Security breach Joint Base Andrews 03/06 Truck convoy laps around Washington 03/06 Report: oil traders eye \$200 per barrel 03/06 National average gas price tops \$4/gal. 03/05 Pandemic adds to burden health care debt 03/05 Putin mindset altered by Covid isolation? 03/05 Putin morphs into white nationalists' hero 03/05 American veterans join the fight in Ukraine 03/05 Truckers protesting Covid mandates mass 03/05 'Freedom convoy'-spinoff arrives Maryland 03/05 Colorado officials: rising threats of violence 03/05 Powerful storms rampage across Iowa 03/05 Florida wildfire growing; evacuations 03/04 Strong hiring signals shift in economy 03/04 Judge slams exempting kids at border 03/04 Court backs Title 42 curbs on migrants 03/04 AAA: gas prices rising fastest pace ever 03/04 Las Vegas: record growth, heat, drought	03/06 Seattle PD, mayor plan starts unraveling 03/06 WA highest record average for gas: \$4.40 03/06 OR ban homebuyer 'love letters' blocked 03/05 Boise mayor: violent threats, harassment 03/05 Hundreds march in Seattle support Ukraine 03/05 Rally at Capitol against WA Covid mandates 03/05 Seattle mayor declares he 'inherited a mess' 03/05 Pickleball official state sport Washington? 03/04 Experts: 'natural experiment' ditching mask 03/04 Droughts continue in the Pacific Northwest

Cyber Awareness Go to articles	03/06 China social media censors kept busy 03/06 Anonymous ops: oppose the genocide 03/06 UK experts: Russia 'Covid for computers' 03/06 Ukraine digital army: attacks, intel, infowar 03/05 TikTok gripped by violence, misinformation 03/04 Ukraine in NATO intel-sharing cyberdefense 03/04 Crypto frauds target Ukrainian donations 03/04 Hackers claim Samsung data, code leak	03/06 Adafuit discloses data leak 03/05 Gig app gathering data prompts concerns 03/04 Meris botnet embeds REvil ransom note	03/06 Tacoma, Pierce Co. brace for cyberattacks 03/05 Teen's website assists Ukraine refugees
Terror Conditions Go to articles	03/07 Taliban crackdown activists, foreigners 03/06 Tunisia: kidnapping terror plot foiled 03/06 Syria militants attack military bus; kill 13 03/06 Afghans need cash stuck in bank accounts 03/05 Pakistan police: bomber, network identified 03/05 ISIS: Ukraine 'amusing punishment'; chaos	03/04 Court sides w/FBI in surveillance dispute 03/04 Marathon bomber death sentence reinstated	
Suspicious, Unusual Go to articles	03/05 World record how high volcano spewed ash 03/04 ESA: space junk digs new moon crater	03/06 'Aseismic' creeping San Andreas Fault	03/04 DNR: heat dome killed 84,000 acres of trees
Crime, Criminals Go to articles	03/07 Russia snubs UN court hearings 03/07 Europol: counterfeit, pirated imports surge 03/06 Gathering evidence war crimes in Ukraine 03/05 Mexico soccer riot leaves 22 injured 03/05 Global sexual abuse allegations in soccer 03/04 Journalist killed in Mexico; 7th this year	03/06 Surge in shootings rattle once-safe Seattle 03/06 Asian-Americans grapple w/attacks in NYC 03/05 WNBA star arrested in Russia: drug charge 03/04 L.A. ex-deputy charged 2019 fatal shooting	03/06 Large Everett fight; shots fired, 1 dead 03/06 Shootings Graham, Spanaway bars; 1 dead 03/05 SPD officers fatally shoot man in downtown 03/05 Employer jailed for worker's death; WA first 03/04 Returning workers help w/crime concerns? 03/04 Businesses: need long term crime solution 03/04 Seattle leaders pledge arrests, prosecution 03/04 Seattle mayor: efforts address crime, safety 03/04 Whatcom Co. deputies sue accused shooter 03/04 Gov signs bills clarifying police reform laws 03/04 OR: Feds seize 150,000 fake pills w/fentanyl

[DISCLAIMER and FAIR USE Notice](#)

Events, Opportunities

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	03/07 Russia offers new limited cease fire
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-03-07/russia-new-limited-cease-fire-pummels-ukrainian-cities
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Russia announced a new cease-fire Monday to allow civilians to escape four Ukrainian beleaguered cities amid deep distrust that its forces will honor the pledge as they hammer strategic centers across the country.</p> <p>Two previous cease-fires hardly got off the ground before Ukrainian officials said continued Russian shelling rendered them meaningless. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians remain trapped; some have died while trying to flee, including an entire family killed on a road in a Kyiv suburb, President Volodymyr Zelensky said, describing it Sunday as “a shooting gallery” for invading troops.</p> <p>The new cease-fire announcement Monday applies to the capital, Kyiv; Ukraine’s second-most populous city, Kharkiv, which has come under sustained assault since the war began 12 days ago; Sumy in the northeast, near the Russian border; and the southern port city of Mariupol, which is essentially blockaded.</p> <p>But the fact that some of the allowed corridors would funnel refugees to Russia itself and to its ally Belarus — from which Russian troops rolled into northern Ukraine — offered scant assurance.</p> <p>“This is an unacceptable option for opening humanitarian corridors,” Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Irina Vereshchuk said at a news briefing. The Ukrainian government has proposed alternative routes.</p> <p>Almost all of the 1.7 million people who have escaped Ukraine in the last two weeks have gone west, to countries such as Poland and Hungary, in what the head of the United Nations’ refugee agency called the “fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II.” The exodus amounts to almost 4% of Ukraine’s entire population — akin to about 12.7 million Americans fleeing the U.S.</p>

Another southern Ukrainian city, Mykolaiv, awoke to renewed shelling Monday, Mayor Oleksandr Senkevich wrote on Facebook.

Taking over Mykolaiv has been a Russian objective for several days, as the city could serve as a key staging ground for a large-scale offensive against Odesa, which lies about 75 miles to the southwest and is Ukraine's most vital [access point to the Black Sea](#).

Senkevich accused Russian forces of deliberately targeting civilian apartment buildings, saying that attacks overnight had left wide swaths of the city without heat. He posted a video showing what looked like a residential building, its center blackened by a blazing fire presumably caused by a shell.

Emergency crews were at work restoring service, he said. But he warned that there was a lot of unexploded ordnance around the city and that residents should keep their distance until authorities could remove them.

Both the two failed cease-fires had included Mariupol, where officials say Russian pummeling has taken a grievous toll in human life and on key infrastructure, cutting off water, electricity and food and medical supplies. Nearly half the city's 430,000 residents are trying to flee, according to one estimate, but only a small fraction have succeeded.

In Kharkiv, authorities said Monday that 209 people, more than half of them civilians, [have been killed in the city](#) since the invasion began.

The latest pledge from Moscow to allow people to escape Mariupol, Kharkiv and other areas followed a phone call Sunday between Russian President Vladimir Putin and French President Emmanuel Macron, who has spoken to Putin [more than any other Western leader](#) in the last few weeks.

But Ukrainians are dubious of Russian promises.

"There can be no 'green corridors' because only the sick brain of the Russians decides when to start shooting and at whom," Anton Gerashchenko, an advisor to Ukrainian Interior Ministry, said on the Telegram messaging app.

Skepticism also hovers over a third round of talks between Ukraine and Russia scheduled for later Monday. Putin has repeatedly insisted that he would end hostilities only if Kyiv capitulates to all his demands, which include a renunciation of any intention to try to join NATO.

For his part, Zelensky has implored NATO to establish a no-fly zone over Ukraine and grown increasingly angry over its rebuff of his request, which the transatlantic alliance says could lead to a larger, even more catastrophic armed confrontation between the West and Russia.

In a video address Monday, Zelensky also called for an international boycott of Russian oil, one of Moscow's most important sources of revenue.

"If the invasion continues and Russia does not abandon its plans against Ukraine, then we need a new sanctions package," Zelensky said. "The international community must act even more decisively."

On Sunday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) said U.S. lawmakers were exploring such a ban. Heavy Western sanctions have already delivered a blow to Russia's economy, with the ruble plunging in value, multinational companies pulling out and the Moscow stock exchange all but frozen, and some U.S. officials have called for more.

"We're raising the cost on the Kremlin and all who aid and enable it for continuing this war of choice," Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said Monday during a visit to Lithuania, adding: "We want this to

come to a stop as quickly as possible, which is why we'll continue to increase pressure on Russia, continue to support Ukraine."

Putin warned over the weekend that the West's economic crackdown was close to a "declaration of war." He launched the incursion Feb. 24 baselessly claiming that Ukraine's democratically elected leadership was a neo-Nazi cabal bent on wiping out ethnic Russians in the country's east. On Monday, a spokesman for the Russian Defense Ministry told reporters that 2,396 "military infrastructure facilities" had been destroyed in Ukraine since the start of the "special operation" — Russia's term for the invasion of its neighbor.

The targets included command posts, anti-aircraft missile systems, radar stations, tanks and other materiel, the Russian state news agency Tass said.

Moscow has acknowledged the [deaths of nearly 500 Russian soldiers](#). But Ukraine's Defense Ministry said Monday that the Russian army has lost more than 11,000 service personnel, more than 1,000 tanks and armored vehicles, and more than 100 aircraft and helicopters. The figures could not be independently verified.

The U.S. estimates that 95% of the forces Russia had massed near Ukraine before the invasion are now in the country. Russia's firepower and troop numbers are vastly superior to those of Ukraine, which has nonetheless put up determined resistance.

"Even if and as Russia might win a battle in Ukraine, that doesn't mean it's winning the war," Blinken said. "If and as Russia might take a city in Ukraine, that doesn't mean that it's taking the hearts and minds of the Ukrainian people. It can't; it won't."

Blinken accused Russian troops of targeting civilians, an allegation Putin denies, although Russian forces and their proxies [leveled cities during conflicts in Chechnya and Syria](#) at the cost of thousands of lives. The International Criminal Court in The Hague and the United Nations' human rights agency have both opened investigations into Russian abuses in Ukraine.

[More than 1.7 million people have left](#) the country in the last two weeks, making it the "fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II," the head of the U.N. refugee agency said. That figure approaches 4% of Ukraine's entire population — akin to about 12.7 million Americans fleeing the U.S.

With the Kremlin in effect [banning independent reporting on the war](#) at home, many in Russia have accepted the government line on the invasion. But the war has not been without domestic opposition: Protests around the country Sunday, from Siberia to St. Petersburg, resulted in the arrests of more than 4,600 people, according to the rights group OVD-Info.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Russia invasion; Navy fight China likely?
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/branches/navy/2022-03-06/navy-training-for-possible-fight-with-china-does-russia-war-make-that-more-likely-5247470.html
GIST	<p>SAN DIEGO (Tribune News Service) — For much of the past year, U.S. Navy and Marine Corps in the Pacific have trained for a conflict with the Pentagon's most powerful potential adversary, China.</p> <p>Now the invasion of Ukraine by Russia — another "near peer" nation and newly aligned partner of China — has raised the stakes of such exercises and stoked fears among some that a Pacific confrontation might be closer than expected if China makes a similar move against Taiwan.</p> <p>But national security experts cautioned against drawing too broad an association based on Cold War comparisons and the "unlimited" partnership that China and Russia announced upon the start of the Beijing Winter Olympics. In that agreement, the two nations signaled support for each other's stated</p>

policy goals toward their neighbors, with China stating its opposition to NATO expansion into Ukraine and Russia saying it opposes Taiwanese independence.

That is not a military alliance akin to the U.S.-led NATO alliance in Europe, analysts pointed out. And the two Asian superpowers have a complex relationship with different priorities.

The united response of the worldwide democratic economic order to Russia's invasion of Ukraine presents a monumental challenge for China, said Elizabeth Wishnick, an expert in Chinese and Russian foreign policy at the Center for Naval Analysis.

Wishnick said there are indications Chinese officials were surprised at the support Ukraine received from countries around the world even though it is not a member of NATO. The swift international reaction, as well as Russia's difficulty in achieving its military objectives, are a lesson for China, she said.

"I think China's in a very difficult spot here," Wishnick said. Chinese President Xi Jinping "is very connected to this partnership with Russia which is showing itself to be extremely troublesome."

China has undergone a decadelong buildup of its military — especially its Navy. That new threat is reflected in recent activity of the 7th Fleet, including two aircraft carriers and other ships based in San Diego.

Navy leaders pointed to the recent deployment of the San Diego-based Carl Vinson Carrier Strike Group to the region as an example of shifting American military priorities. For the first time in almost 20 years, a U.S.-based Pacific carrier deployment did not conduct operations in the Middle East, instead focusing on the busy international shipping corridors of the South China Sea, which China claims as its own territorial waters.

Last summer, the U.S. military held a global "Large Scale Exercise," which Adm. Mike Gilday, the chief of naval operations, called the biggest such exercise in "a generation."

The exercise spanned 17 time zones, included dozens of units at sea and more than 50 ashore. While the Navy said the exercise had "no link" to a specific or current geopolitical situation, it was based on scenarios the Navy and Marine Corps could face in the future.

Just a few months later, military leaders were again testing U.S. military capabilities in the Pacific, this time during a classified tabletop war game called "Global 14."

Navy commanders — including Gilday and the civilian head of the Navy department, Sec. Carlos Del Toro — led the classified game with U.S. allies in November to assess the service's future needs should a conflict erupt. While the details of the game were classified, Gilday and Del Toro told reporters when it ended that the game gave them a "good sense" of how the U.S. would fare in a fight with its new types of naval ships, such as littoral combat ships, and new unmanned ships and aircraft.

"As a department, we are clearly focused on the Pacific," Gilday said during the Nov. 17 conference call with reporters.

Del Toro compared the game with those held in the 1930s to assess how then-new carriers and submarines would fare in a fight. The strategic thinking that came out of those exercises was valuable, he said. Now, with the U.S. Navy training to counter another powerful navy — rather than the ship-to-shore attacks of U.S. wars in the Middle East — and new advanced Navy weapons platforms, the games offer a similar value.

"We are now looking at the many new technologies we have that will come online over the next two years," Del Toro said at the time. "Navy and Marines will be able to stand up to any adversary we face over the next few years."

Recent Navy activity in the Western Pacific and messaging from the service focus on its operations in the region. In January, two San Diego-based aircraft carriers, the Carl Vinson and the Abraham Lincoln, conducted dual-carrier operations with their respective air wings — both of which involved the service's newest fighter, the F-35C Lightning II.

The ships also participated in training with allied navies, such as those of Great Britain and Japan.

Don't call it a 'cold war'

Renewed Russian aggression in Europe, as well as its partnership with China, has some wondering whether the U.S. is in the midst of a second cold war.

Gregory Daddis, a retired Army colonel who now serves as the director of the Center for War and Society at San Diego State University, is a military historian who specializes in the Cold War. Daddis told the Union-Tribune that while there are parallels, the world is a much different place than it was a half-century ago.

"We are in a far less ideological contest (than) what was driving U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War," Daddis said. "The globalization of the world economy is far more different than it was during the Cold War era."

Wishnick agreed.

"This is not a new Cold War," she said, citing the globalized economy and other global problems — such as climate change — that China wants to play a part in solving. "China wants to have a seat at the table."

Daddis questioned whether the focus on countering China militarily is distracting the U.S. from more pressing domestic threats to democracy in addition to the threat of climate change.

"Our inability so far to deal with climate change may in fact be a greater threat than China," Daddis said. "If we're still using Cold War models to define threats to U.S. national security I might argue that those models might be somewhat outdated."

Period of assessment

If there was an understanding between China and Russia going into the Ukraine invasion, the results so far may have given China pause.

Last week, the New York Times reported that a Western intelligence report said senior Chinese officials told Russia to delay its invasion of Ukraine until the end of the Winter Olympics. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson told reporters a day later the report was "fake news."

Wishnick said that Chinese staffing at its Ukraine embassy were told not to evacuate ahead of Russia's attack, suggesting the China did not expect the invasion to become bogged down.

There are those in China who see an opportunity with the U.S. distracted by Russia, Wishnick said. But Xi is seeking a third term as leader of China's Communist Party this fall — in defiance of precedent — and will be seeking stability until that process plays out. She doubts Xi will ramp up China's aggression toward Taiwan or in the South China Sea, after seeing the economic sanctions and worldwide condemnation aimed at Russia.

"I don't think this is going to be an opportunity for some two-front war or (for) adventurism in Taiwan," she said.

Daddis said it's unlikely anything will change in the Western Pacific until the consequences for Russia are better understood.

	<p>“My sense is that Chinese policy makers will want to see first how invasion and sanctions affect their economy before making any moves,” he said. “The problem is, with war, there’s always potential for miscalculation and unintended consequences.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/07 Russia ruble hits new record low
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/russian-rouble-drops-fresh-record-low-thin-offshore-trade-2022-03-07/
GIST	<p>LONDON, March 7 (Reuters) - Russia's rouble tumbled to a fresh record low in thin offshore trade on Monday, with local markets closed for trading until at least Wednesday.</p> <p>The rouble weakened to 133.5 to the dollar after closing at 121.037 on Friday, according to Refinitiv data . On the EBS trading platform, the rouble weakened as far as 141.00 to the dollar.</p> <p>Bid/offer spreads were between 10 and 15 cents, pointing to an increasingly illiquid market.</p> <p>Trading on the MOEX Moscow exchange is scheduled to be closed until Wednesday for a bank holiday.</p> <p>The rouble has lost more than 40% of its value against the greenback since the start of the year, with losses sharply accelerating since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24, which sparking sweeping sanctions from Western capitals.</p> <p>The curbs on Russia, its lenders, corporates and key individuals, as well as counter measures from Moscow, have cut Russian assets increasingly out of global financial markets and have made it tricky for investors to trade any securities.</p> <p>"It has become very difficult to trade the rouble after the sanctions," said Aaron Hurd, senior portfolio manager, currency, at State Street Global Advisors. "Liquidity has vanished and markets have become very volatile."</p> <p>Russia calls its actions in Ukraine a "special operation."</p> <p>Stocks last traded on Feb. 25 on Moscow's bourse.</p> <p>Five-year credit default swaps in Russia - reflecting the cost to insure exposure to the country's sovereign debt - soared to a record 2,619 basis points compared to 1,725 basis points on Friday, data from IHS Markit showed. read more</p> <p>Trades on Russia's sovereign dollar- and euro-denominated debt have all but ground to a halt, with some issues bid at around 20 cents in the dollar or euro.</p> <p>"With Russian prices on the euro bond somewhere around 20, this is going to go on for a long, long time, and nobody wants to be associated with (the rouble)," said Gabriel Sterne, head of global EM research at Oxford Economics.</p> <p>"Just sell it and take a loss. You have to interpret the price movements as: there's almost infinite supply and very little demand for these assets at the moment. It's now just a matter of an orderly disposal of Russian assets."</p> <p>Rouble implied volatility gauges - a measure of demand for options on the currency rising or falling against the dollar - have stayed near record highs hit last week, with the one-week gauge above 84% and the one month one above 94%.</p>

	The rouble's collapse has also hit trading volumes. Turnover on the Russian currency on EBS fell more than 80% on Friday compared to the end of February.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/07 Retirement funds brace for losses
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-retirement-funds-heavy-on-stocks-brace-for-losses-11646601597
GIST	<p>Volatile stock markets are eroding the retirement savings of America's teachers and firefighters after public pension systems ended last year with equity holdings at a 10-year high.</p> <p>Public pension funds had a median 61% of their assets in stocks as of Dec. 31, up from 54% 10 years ago, according to Wilshire Trust Universe Comparison Service. Since then, the Russia-Ukraine War and expectations that the Federal Reserve will raise interest rates this month have battered equity prices, reducing those holdings by billions of dollars.</p> <p>At the nation's largest pension fund, the California Public Employees' Retirement System, total reported holdings have fallen to \$475 billion as of March 2 from \$482 billion at the end of January. The S&P 500's total return was minus 2.71% during the same period. Roughly half of the California worker fund is in stocks.</p> <p>The situation highlights public retirement funds' enduring dependence on the stock market and the potential impact on local government services and municipal-bond prices if losses continue. Smaller retirement systems tend to rely even more heavily on stocks than larger ones, which are more likely to seek returns from private-market assets like infrastructure and private equity.</p> <p>U.S. state and local government pension funds control more than \$4 trillion in public-worker retirement savings but will need hundreds of billions of additional dollars to cover promised future benefits. Over the past 12 years, blockbuster stock performance has swelled pension coffers, bringing state and local governments closer to being able to cover those liabilities and taking some of the pressure off taxpayers already burdened by high pension costs.</p> <p>A downturn, however, could ultimately squeeze state and local budgets. That is because when pension-fund returns fall short, the workers and government employers that pay into them end up helping to make up the shortfall. Annual pension contributions are already a drag on the finances of some cities and states, leaving less money for operations and debt payments and leading to credit-rating downgrades.</p> <p>Research firm Municipal Market Analytics views a sustained market correction as the biggest threat to state and local general-obligation-bond prices.</p> <p>"State pensions often have an allocation to equities that is greater than the size of [the states'] annual budgets, so a correction in equity prices can ultimately have an outsize impact on the state," said Municipal Market Analytics partner Matt Fabian.</p> <p>States and cities cut services, laid off workers and rolled back benefits for new employees after the 2007-09 recession took a huge bite out of U.S. public-pension-fund holdings.</p> <p>Government finances today are far from that type of austerity scenario. With the S&P 500 returning double-digit gains in nine of the past 12 calendar years, pension funds have built back their holdings. Over the past two years, federal Covid-19 aid and rising tax revenues from the stimulus-fueled economic boom have bolstered municipal budgets.</p> <p>Pension managers and trustees regularly pore over market projections in an attempt to distribute money in ways that will both insulate their funds against downturns and deliver ambitious long-term gains. Some pension funds missed out on gains by rolling back stock allocations in the years before the pandemic. Many reaped big returns from the stimulus-fueled economic boom that followed. Now many</p>

	<p>retirement systems are paring back equities targets in response to projections about dimming stock-market returns.</p> <p>When Angela Miller-May took over as investment chief of the \$57 billion Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund in August, U.S. stocks were 44% of the portfolio, above the fund's 39% target. Her team worked to rebalance the portfolio, shifting funds into other asset classes, and trimming the holdings to approximately 42.4% by November.</p> <p>"Uncertainty and market volatility have impacted almost every fund and continue to be a concern along with expectations of muted returns moving forward," Ms. Miller-May said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/07 Putin wreaking carnage in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/07/politics/vladimir-putin-ukraine-carnage-analysis/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)Millions of lives could be destroyed to slake Vladimir Putin's Cold War obsession.</p> <p>Less than three weeks into Russia's invasion of Ukraine -- a historic outrage 30 years in the making -- the world is looking on in horror at the barbarity, human tragedy, appalling destruction and worldwide reverberations sparked by one man's orders.</p> <p>Ukraine's fate starkly underlines that even 20 years into the 21st century and despite the world's vows to learn from history, a lone autocrat who has ruthlessly fashioned a political system to eliminate dissent and reality itself has the power to cause unfathomable human loss and misery.</p> <p>Putin's apparent willingness to bombard Ukraine into submission and clearly gratuitous targeting of the innocent civilians he insisted are Russian kin mean the humanitarian disaster is likely only just beginning. More than a million refugees have already fled their homes, according to the United Nations. Millions more will likely follow -- as family lives, jobs and communities are shattered. That's without the thousands of civilians sure to die in a prolonged Russian blitzkrieg.</p> <p>While there is speculation about Putin's goals and state of mind and huge public interest in the courage of Ukrainians vowing to resist the invasion, it is critical for the world to properly understand the basic reality of the apparent war crimes that are now occurring in Ukraine.</p> <p>In a Kyiv suburb on Sunday, two small children and two adults were obliterated by Russian shelling as they tried to flee. "A family died ... in front of my eyes," Oleksandr Markushyn, the mayor of Irpin, said. Meanwhile, the dead lay unburied in the smoldering wreckage of Kharkiv -- a city of 1.5 million people, which was under a prolonged bombardment that served as a warning of Kyiv's likely fate to come. Other Ukrainians were trapped by shocking Russian shelling of humanitarian corridors. Photos and video of Ukrainian men putting their families on evacuation trains and heading out to fight are reviving the trauma of a continent's blood-soaked history.</p> <p>If harrowing video of Ukraine was in black and white, it would be easy to mistake it for historic newsreel of World War II, the last time such scenes of devastation and cruelty were inflicted by one sovereign nation on another in Europe.</p> <p>And it all flows from the mind of a Russian President apparently motivated by his own historic scars as a KGB officer in East Germany when the Berlin Wall fell. Putin, seeking to redraw the post-Cold War map of Europe, has now engineered the counterpoint to those joyous scenes three decades later in his relentless bombardments designed to revive Russia as a super power.</p> <p>Ukraine's future looks increasingly bleak</p> <p>The events of a bloody weekend underscore that despite the West's impressive ramping up of sanctions strangling the Russian economy and the courage of resisting Ukrainian civilians and the pleas of</p>

their president, Ukraine's future is bleak, with Putin having raised questions about it continuing to exist as a nation state.

Massive Western sanctions might eventually whip up sufficient opposition inside Russia, where citizens are struggling under a collapsing economy, to topple Putin. Arms shipments to Ukraine from the West will certainly increase the cost to Moscow's forces of the invasion and possible occupation.

But the reality that the West will not intervene directly to avoid triggering an escalation with Russia that could spark a nuclear exchange grants Putin an advantage and deepens Ukraine's tragedy. Sooner or later, the outside world may find itself looking on at a massacre it was powerless to prevent. This terrible possibility was raised in [Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's](#) latest heartbreaking appeal for help on Sunday.

"We are humans, and it's your humanitarian duty to protect us, protect civilians, and you can do it," Zelensky told the world.

"If you don't do it, if you at least don't give us airplanes so that we could defend ourselves, that the only conclusion remains -- you also want us to be very slowly killed."

Putin is still dictating events

While the US is talking with Poland about [a plan to send its Russian-made warplanes](#) to Ukraine and there is debate about a full embargo on Russian oil exports, the West is close to hitting the limit of what can be done without triggering a direct conflict with Putin. Thus, US messaging is beginning to stress the magnitude of what has already been done to help. That includes western sanctions that have thrown the Russian economy back into a Soviet-era dark age and the arsenals of anti-tank and anti-aircraft rockets poured into Ukraine in the West's new proxy war with Russia.

As Americans cursed Putin over the weekend with gasoline soaring well above \$4 a gallon in some states because of an oil market rocked by the invasion, [Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#) warned on CNN's "State of the Union" that the Russian leader's savagery was still dictating events.

"Vladimir Putin has, unfortunately, the capacity -- with the sheer manpower that he has in Ukraine and the overmatch that he has -- the ability to keep grinding things down, against incredibly resilient and courageous Ukrainians," he told Jake Tapper.

Speaking from Moldova, a non-NATO US ally that fears it might be next in Putin's firing line, Blinken seemed to be looking ahead to a post-invasion future in which a western-supported Ukrainian resistance might make Putin's troops pay a heavy price.

"I think we have to be prepared for this to last for some time. But just winning a battle is not winning the war. Taking a city does not mean he's taking the hearts and minds of the Ukrainian people," Blinken said. "On the contrary, he is destined to lose. The Ukrainian people have demonstrated that they will not allow themselves to be subjugated to Vladimir Putin or to Russia's rule."

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, also stressed the severity of Western sanctions but signaled that Zelensky's plea for immediate EU membership was unlikely to be fast tracked.

"Nobody doubts that these brave Ukrainian people and the outstanding leadership of President Zelensky, all fighting for our common values, that they belong to our European family," von der Leyen told Tapper. "And with the application, President Zelensky set a process in motion. This process will take some time."

Putin's personal crusade

The way that Putin has single-handedly pushed his country into war, crushed internal dissent and berated apparently bemused national security aides on television has underscored how much of the Ukraine war is a personal crusade.

	<p>His unhinged and ahistorical speeches about the war -- including his false claims he is trying to denazify Ukraine -- have sparked concern about whether a leader once seen as a ruthless and cool broker of Russia's national interests has slipped into a parallel mental reality. That, along with his nuclear threats, have caused concern about how far a desperate Russian leader, who has effectively made his own political survival contingent on a war that is turning into a quagmire, might go.</p> <p>"He is now engaged in a conflict where he's either going to have a costly military victory, followed by a costly occupation that he can't afford, or he's going to get caught in a long-term military quagmire, at the same time as he's facing a second front, which is an economy in free-fall in his own country," Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida said on "State of the Union."</p> <p>"So, the combination of these two things, I think, puts us in a very dangerous place. And that is, he's going to have to do something, some escalation, some amplification of this crisis, in order to restore strategic balance, in his view, with the West. And I'm worried about what those things could be."</p> <p>So far, in the two-and-a-half weeks since the invasion, Putin has done nothing but escalate, despite a calm Western reaction to his nuclear provocations. It remains unclear how he would react to the possibility that Poland or Romania might provide fighter jets to Ukraine -- a step that appears to drag two ex-Warsaw Pact nations closer to indirect conflict with Russia.</p> <p>The record of the invasion, however, shows that regardless of how much pain new Western steps might inflict, they are unlikely to stop Putin playing out his obsession that Ukraine must never be allowed to join the West -- even if that means blowing it and its people to smithereens.</p> <p>As Zelensky put it in a new video message Sunday evening, "The aggressor's audacity is a clear signal to the West that sanctions imposed against Russia are not enough."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 Report: oil traders eye \$200 per barrel
SOURCE	https://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/oil-traders-200-per-barrel-report
GIST	<p>Oil traders believe the ongoing Russian-Ukraine war and its international fallout could drive up prices this month, with some optimistic traders eyeing a price over \$200 per barrel.</p> <p>On Monday, prices to buy call options increased, including at least 200 traded contracts to buy May contracts for Brent futures at \$200 a barrel by the end of the month, Bloomberg reported. June Brent contracts also increased as a \$150-a-barrel call option doubled just ahead of the weekend and a \$180-a-barrel option jumped 110 percent, according to the report.</p> <p>Russia's invasion of Ukraine last week has spurred several countries to take action by enacting financial sanctions, barring Russia from international banking systems, or have announced they are considering crude bans. As Russian supplies continue to be disrupted, opportunistic traders are looking to cash in on the potential oil scarcity.</p> <p>The U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Russia are the largest oil producers in the world, with Russia exporting 7.8 million barrels a day of crude last year, Bloomberg reported.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 Seattle PD, mayor plan starts unraveling
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3380553/rantz-seattles-plan-for-six-stationed-cops-isnt-quite-happening-suspects-already-released/
GIST	Seattle mayor Bruce Harrell announced a plan to address what's one of the most dangerous streets in the city.

The plan comes after a week of high-profile crimes. Over the course of just a few days, on or around Third Avenue and Pine Street in downtown Seattle, there were two fatal shootings, three stabbings, and a carjacking.

Harrell's plan included a mobile precinct, plus six dedicated officers on Third and Pine, and emphasis patrol by the King County Sheriff's Office. At the time his plan was announced, local and federal law enforcement announced 16 arrests of suspected drug dealers to show the region is getting serious on crime.

Unfortunately, much of the plan's unveiling was a PR stunt.

While there are certainly efforts by Seattle Police to clean up the area, the department is hamstrung by a lack of available staff. There's also little clarity on whether or not they can enforce many laws. Plus, most of the arrested suspects were already released from jail when the announcement was made.

There's not enough police staff for Harrell's plan

Mere hours after Harrell's announcement, there were only two dedicated officers visible on Third and Pine. There was also what was effectively a dummy sheriff's vehicle parked in the area, belonging to a deputy working private security for a nearby business.

On Saturday, there were three officers stationed on the block.

On Sunday afternoon, after the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH inquired about staffing levels, the SPD was more than fully staffed along the downtown corridor. Several officers volunteered for overtime from different precincts. There were at least ten on patrol, with others supplementing for arrest. It's possible that due to the rushed nature of the current plan at Third and Pine, officers didn't have time off until Sunday to volunteer for overtime.

The SPD does not have the necessary staffing for six dedicated officers to actively patrol this dangerous block. It's likely why the criminal homeless addicts and drug dealers who were on Third and Pine moved just one block south to Third and Pike/Union. On Friday night and into the weekend, they continued to openly sell and consume drugs.

At one point on Friday night, a homeless drug addict was openly carrying drug paraphernalia, including a small piece of tin foil to smoke his drug of choice, feet away from the two patrol officers. Two blocks east, more addicts openly smoke what's most likely fentanyl in front of private security guarding local retail shops.

The department is struggling to recruit enough volunteers to take the open slots for Third and Pine, while concurrently trying to keep visible staff at 12th Ave. and Jackson St., another high-profile location for crimes that is getting SPD emphasis.

The staffing puzzle

While they are not stationing six officers on Third and Pine, the SPD is offering more patrols in the area. Some are undercover, and others are on bicycles or patrol cars in the general area. The SPD is also using officers from various precincts to patrol when they can.

But plans on staffing are still being fully developed.

When an officer makes an arrest on or near Third and Pine, it pulls that officer from the area as he or she processes the arrest or submits paperwork. Officers also get breaks during their shifts. And as the city experienced on Saturday night, a nearby shooting took officers away from the specific patrols.

There's not yet a plan to backfill those officers when they have to leave the area for whatever reason. This is problematic because when they leave, the homeless addicts and other criminals return over the course of half an hour.

“We have supplemented with other resources as necessary to achieve the desired public safety effect,” SPD Captain Steve Strand tells the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH via email. “We now have bicycle officers assigned to the area 6 days a week. If you don’t see a uniformed presence in the area I would suspect we have an undercover operation occurring.”

What can actually be enforced?

There’s also confusion on what laws officers can and cannot enforce.

Under the previous mayor Jenny Durkan and city attorney Pete Holmes, officers were forced to take a hands-off approach to enforcement. Many misdemeanor laws were purposefully being ignored, such as open drug use and displaying obvious drug paraphernalia, trespassing, and trafficking in stolen goods.

Newly-elected Seattle City Attorney Ann Davison campaigned on the promise to charge more criminals for their crimes. But during the plan’s unveiling, Harrell said there “will be arrests... where it is a bookable offense.” Due to COVID restrictions, most misdemeanor crimes have not been bookable.

To clear up confusion, SPD leadership is communicating and meeting with the City Attorney’s Office and Harrell representatives to figure out if officers are now allowed to arrest for many of the crimes officers witness.

Suspects already released from jail

The 12th and Jackson location has seen a surge in violence, too.

The SPD is offering emphasis patrols and presence here, similar to Third and Pine. But to keep these patrols from impacting the Third and Pine plan, the SPD is using detectives, rather than patrol officers, at 12th and Jackson. Some progressive activists, however, are trying to push the police out.

Thanks to difficult and dangerous police work over the last couple of weeks, at least 16 suspects were arrested for drug trafficking, gun violence, and crime at 12th and Jackson as part of Operation New Day. The arrests were announced via a press release from Harrell, King County Prosecutor Dan Satterberg, and the Seattle Police Department.

But of the 16 charged in King County, nine of them were released before the press release reached the inboxes of media outlets that reported the operation’s success.

District Court Judge Rebecca Robertson released four of the nine suspects on their own personal recognizance, over the objections of prosecutors.

Judge releases suspects

The King County Prosecutor’s Office says Ryan Palmer sold fentanyl to an undercover officer.

Upon his arrest, police say Palmer possessed “heroin, suspected fentanyl pills, mushrooms, and 38 individually wrapped packages of crack cocaine.” The KCPO argued that he was “unlikely to return to court if released because of his eight previous warrants and two cases with current open warrants.” Judge Robertson released him on his own personal recognizance.

Officers arrested Nalong Somchanthavong after allegedly catching him selling narcotics near 12th Avenue South and South Jackson Street. According to police, when Somchanthavong was arrested, they found him with over 36 grams of crack cocaine, over 34 grams of suspected fentanyl, and nearly 23 grams of suspected methamphetamines.

At Somchanthavong’s first appearance, Judge Robertson was told about his 13 previous warrants, which KCPO’s argued “makes it unlikely that Mr. Somchanthavong will return to court if released.” He was released on his own personal recognizance.

Quan Nguyen is accused of selling fentanyl to undercover police. When Nguyen was arrested, the prosecutor's office said police found approximately 100 pills of suspected fentanyl on him, plus \$20,093 in cash. Similarly, Kevin Guzman is accused of selling fentanyl to undercover police. He has two prior convictions for assault and criminal solicitation, according to the prosecutor's office. Judge Robertson released them both on their own personal recognizance.

A court spokesperson explains the releases

A spokesperson for the court offered an explanation for the decision to release the suspects. He said, at the time of the first appearance, charges had not yet been filed.

"Individuals appearing on the District Court first appearance calendar are being held only on a suspicion of a crime; no charges have been filed yet," the spokesperson explained to the Jason Rantz Show on KTTH. "The court rules that District Court judges must follow for these hearings require a person's mandatory release for non-capital offenses unless the Court determines that such release: (1) will not assure the person's appearance at future hearings, or (2) when there is shown a likely danger that the person will commit a violent crime, seek to intimidate witnesses, or interfere with the administration of justice. Even if one of those risks is found, the rules allow bail only as a last resort if no other conditions are sufficient."

The spokesperson did not explain how suspects with prior criminal convictions and, in one case, a suspect with 13 previous warrants, would not be considered a danger to the community. Judge Robertson didn't even impose bail.

It's also normal for charges and additional paperwork to come in after a first appearance.

"Additional documents beyond the first appearance document are required by law to be referred to prosecutors by police for a felony case filing, and those are typically sent after the first appearance happens," a KCPO spokesperson said.

Minor improvements

An understaffed SPD is doing what it can to combat the surge of crime. But without more cops, there's only so much they can do. And the officers, who are working, are getting burnt out from significant overtime.

At the same time, Satterberg's unwillingness to charge for open-air drug use means the homeless addicts do not only continue to use but smoke fentanyl, meth, and/or heroin right in front of officers. But those officers can't arrest because of the region's (and now state's) decriminalization efforts. And the one law enforcement vehicle driving around the area for visibility is unlikely to do much good anyway.

When you know you won't get charged, you're unlikely to change your behavior.

These addicts will inevitably die of an overdose while area politicians claim arresting them lacks compassion and stigmatizes the addict. They'd rather the addict die than make them feel bad for their illness.

Still, Captain Strand believes they will be able to make a difference.

"Just like with my emphasis at 12th and Jackson, the results should speak for themselves. I have crafted a holistic approach that includes outreach, community involvement, focused enforcement, along with a police presence," Strand said. "My goal is to improve the safety of the downtown core that is seen and felt. It will take time for lasting success but I am optimistic for the future of Seattle."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/07 National Guard follow Pentagon orders?
SOURCE	https://www.navytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2022/03/07/does-the-national-guard-have-to-follow-pentagon-orders-sometimes/

The head of the Oklahoma National Guard told his troops in November that — per an order from Gov. Kevin Stitt — units under his jurisdiction would not enforce a mandate from Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

The Defense Department's response has been incredulous. The mandate's a direct, lawful order, multiple senior leaders said.

In addition, the president has the authority to give state-status Guardsmen governing orders, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told Military Times on Feb. 16. That includes vaccine compliance.

"Failure by a member to comply with deadlines and requirements can lead to prohibition on participation in drills, training, and other duty conducted under title 32 and will jeopardize the member's status in the National Guard," he added.

But National Guard troops not on active duty, known as Title 10 status, might not have to follow the mandate, calling into question how much power the Pentagon has to enforce its policies for roughly 1 million troops who spend most of their time off-duty.

Now the issue has come to a head. [Multiple lawsuits](#), filed by governors who disagree with the mandate, will hash out who has the final say. They're hoping to settle a long-running dispute about who, ultimately, sets standards and policies for the National Guard.

National Guard, state control

Questions about authority came up again, in December, when the department unveiled an updated policy governing affiliations with extremist ideology. The Pentagon said it applied to Guard members. The National Guard Bureau said it didn't.

The truth was somewhere in the middle, but to understand the disagreement one must understand the Guard's history.

In some ways, National Guard is almost a misnomer for a force that spends the majority of its time under a governor's control. Founded as a network of state militias, the Army and Air National Guard have participated in conflicts more and more, up to and including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where their operational tempo was practically indistinguishable from that of active duty units.

As a result, Guard organizations have sought increasingly more parity with the active duty component. In the past decade, the [Army](#) and [Air Force](#) stood up commissions studying the role of their National Guard components and whether they should be absorbed into the federally controlled Reserve organizations.

The answer was they should not.

"The Air National Guard, and the Army National Guard, fought so hard to be taken seriously as an interchangeable option to the active component, more so than even the Reserve component did," Katherine Kuzminski, a senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security, told Military Times in a Jan. 24 interview.

"Certainly, this isn't the Guard writ large, right?" she added. "This is the Guard, in some states, really undermining this credibility that they fought so hard for."

But Guard leaders, and their advocates, don't necessarily see it that way.

"Most of the rhetoric that you hear is coming from people who don't necessarily have a clear understanding of the history of the country, or the National Guard, or why things are organized and certain activities are authorized under the different authorities," retired Brig. Gen. Roy Robinson, president of the National Guard Association of the United States, told Military Times on Friday.

A key part of the Guard's heritage is a state militia role. Troops serving on state active duty, or under Title 32 — a federally funded, state-controlled status created to allow the Guard to keep its troops trained to a high readiness level without mobilizing them under a president's orders — are subject only to the orders of their state chain of command.

So when Stitt — the commander in chief of Oklahoma Guardsmen for all but maybe a handful of days a year — said the shot wasn't mandatory, it became so.

"The sadder thing is that it's the political nature of the position of [the adjutant general] versus, you know, a military commander within the the active duty components, that clearly report to the Pentagon," Kuzminski said. "It was really good that it got to the point where [Defense Secretary Lloyd] Austin himself was the one who intervened and said, 'No, this is for the vaccine standards ... this is applicable to everyone, and I have the authority and the ability to withhold pay.' "

Austin has tried to push back against eight states who have sent letters to him requesting that he exempt them from the vaccine mandate, [some of whom](#) have [filed a lawsuit](#).

In his [responses](#), Austin has told governors that Title 32 status is subject to federal orders, and that refusal to get vaccinated could prohibit troops from participating in required drill weekends and training.

Presidential authority in the U.S. code requires that "all members of the Idaho Army and Air National Guard, regardless of duty status, must follow the directions of the Secretaries of the Army and the Air Force, respectively, regarding specific COVID-19 vaccine compliance deadlines and requirements," he wrote in one of the letters.

Brig. Gen. Tommy Mancino, Oklahoma's adjutant general, [in December ordered unvaccinated Air Guardsmen](#) to stay home from drill weekends, rather than risk not getting paid for their time.

Guardsmen who don't show up to Title 32 drills and training don't face immediate consequences, but they can have their federal status stripped eventually, preventing them from receiving any federal pay or benefits.

Mancino rejects the notion that following his governor's order is a political act, regardless of whether Stitt's motivations are political. He is simply following the letter of the law, he told Military Times on Jan. 25, and Title 32 is clear about who calls the shots and when.

"If Congress were to change the law, then I would comply," he said.

How these conflicting orders will play out in a state like Oklahoma, where the governor has explicitly ordered the chain of command not to enforce the mandate, remains to be seen. And it may take many months to sort it all out, as Oklahoma, Texas and Alaska have sued DoD to exempt them from Austin's order.

This presents a quandary that DoD has not been able to explain. For a service member on active duty, unit leaders have been ordered to report their unvaccinated troops, which can initiate an involuntary separation for those who continue to refuse.

But in the National Guard, when a chain of command has been told not to enforce, there is no immediate trigger — no way for the federal government to know anyone is out of compliance, no way for the individual services to start separation proceedings, and no way for the Defense Financial Accounting Service to cut off pay.

One scenario is that the Army and Air Force could audit the medical records of certain state Guard organizations, looking for unvaccinated individuals.

The [Air Force's vaccine policy](#) requires commanders to report up the chain whether their airmen are vaccinated, exempt, awaiting an exemption decision or in refusal.

Airmen who remain unvaccinated will be barred from participating in Title 32 activities and relegated to the Individual Ready Reserve, a status with no pay or benefits, according a memo from the Air Force secretary.

[The Army](#) hasn't yet published guidance that would apply to its National Guardsmen, whose vaccination deadline is June 30.

More likely, perhaps, is that unvaccinated Guardsmen could fly under the radar until they inevitably get called up on Title 10 — whether for a deployment or for mandatory training or professional education that, without it, could make them ineligible for a promotion and therefore ineligible to continue their service.

Another option would be for DoD to withhold state Guard funding, which would not target individuals, but could put pressure on leadership to comply. There's also the possibility that not attending drill weekends, as in the case of Oklahoma's Air Guardsmen, could eventually get troops bumped from service.

But the Pentagon has not presented any of those scenarios when asked by Military Times. Neither has it acknowledged that it could be months or years before they catch up to every soldier or airman out of compliance.

Rather, according to Kirby, DoD is working with the organizations responsible to execute policy to make sure that everything, eventually, is compliant.

"We recognized early on that the execution of these Department-wide policies in the Reserves, including the Guard, could carry with it some unique challenges," referring to both the vaccine and extremism policies. "That is why the Secretary has stayed engaged with leadership in the Military Departments, Services and the National Guard Bureau, directing the development of appropriate implementation policies for their respective chains of command. With that, implementation of these policies then rests with the appropriate chains of command."

The military functions on standards and policy, held together by a common understanding that they are necessary for good order and discipline, and that there will be consequences if they aren't upheld. So what happens when a chain of command decides not to follow them?

Prohibited activities

The National Guard Bureau put out a memo in July clarifying that its troops are not beholden to a DoD instruction that prohibits a range of extremist activities, from recruiting for far-right hate groups to posting anti-government sentiment online.

The memo was a reaction to Colorado National Guard officer who filed a lawsuit after his chain of command disciplined him for participating in a non-violent Black Lives Matter rally while in a civilian status.

The lawsuit doesn't argue that the policy shouldn't apply to him when he's not on Title 10 orders, but that it "is unconstitutional because it restricts my right to peacefully participate in Black Lives Matter and other protests when not on duty and not in uniform," Capt. Alan Kennedy told Military Times in December.

But that memo opened another can of worms the DoD has not been able to explain away.

“We’re not aware of any concerns that have been expressed by the reserve component or the National Guard,” Pentagon spokesman John Kirby told Military Times on Dec. 21. “... if you read the instruction, it very clearly relates to all uniformed personnel.”

For its part, the National Guard Bureau has refused to talk about why it put out the memo or whether it stands by the contents, as Kennedy’s lawsuit is ongoing.

Now, just because certain rules don’t directly apply to National Guard members does not mean that they can’t be held accountable for, say, not getting vaccinated, or for spending their Tuesday afternoons recruiting for a neo-Nazi group.

“All my career was in the National Guard, and if I found a bad actor, I crushed them, right?” Robinson said. “And there’s a whole lot of people out there that do the same thing.”

The National Guard might be able to do an even better job of monitoring something like extremism, Robinson said, because commanders and their troops are generally part of the same civilian community and spend decades working together, rather than the regular change-of-station moves on the active duty side.

“I think they all go for the same standards,” Robinson said. “I actually think that that’s the reason that you don’t see any more extremist related activities among members of the National Guard than you do in any of the other components in any of the services.”

While National Guard commanders might not use the Pentagon’s framework for investigating prohibited activities, they could order a security clearance review for a Guardsman they suspect of associating with extremist groups, for example.

“When you do the background clearance, when you see activities on any type of social media ... authorities in a state status have to have all the authority they need to immediately require an administrative review of that security clearance,” he said, and a failed security check could end a career, at least.

There’s also local law enforcement for any illegal activity, but not having to abide by DoD standards still leaves a bit of a loophole, where a commander could disregard any reports.

“We’re trying to prevent participation in bad behavior, right?” Kuzminski, the CNAS fellow. “But we can’t nail you for being in a Proud Boys Facebook group. But we know that if you’re in a Proud Boys Facebook group, you’re probably more likely to commit behavior that we’re trying to prevent. Right?”

That isn’t to say, however, that active duty commanders don’t ever drop the ball when it comes to investigating or disciplining prohibited activities, but it does present a bit of a gray area in the Guard, compared to a largely black-and-white policy for active duty troops.

“Over the course of my military life — I’ve seen a lot of things that that were not necessarily, in my opinion, perfectly handled,” Robinson said. “But I will tell you, I think that a lot of that reflects the society that we serve. And I think it’s gotten significantly better. We may be as good as we’ve ever been, in terms of policing our own formations. And in some cases, I believe — yeah, I think I think we’re better than some of our active component counterparts.”

The Pentagon has since acknowledged the limits of its power.

“Commanders and leaders at all levels should take immediate actions to address active participation in extremist activity in a manner consistent with the laws or ordinances of their State, Territory, or the District of Columbia, or the Uniform Code of Military Justice, as applicable,” Kirby said.

“Engaging in prohibited extremist activity will jeopardize a member’s status in the National Guard,” he added, though not necessarily because of a Pentagon policy.

One force, one fight?

These scenarios present multiple instances where active duty and National Guard troops are beholden, at least on paper, to different standards. They’re not the only instances: Guardsmen are not subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice, which means that civilian authorities are expected to investigate and adjudicate any crimes committed while under a state-controlled status.

There is an [Office of Complex Investigations](#) where commanders can refer one of their troops if civilian authorities decline to pursue a sexual assault report, for example, but it still can’t bring charges, and it’s completely up to a commander whether to contact them.

“My understanding is that your authority is one of encouraging, cajoling, subtly hoping that they will do the right thing, but outside of giving them money, we don’t have any hook to get them to do what they should do,” Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Calif., told National Guard Bureau chief Army Gen. Dan Hokanson during a House Armed Services subcommittee hearing on Jan. 19.

And then there’s the issue of the [Texas border mission](#), where thousands of soldiers have been deployed alongside the Texas Department of Public Safety. Additionally, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem in 2021 pledged to send some of her troops to back up the Texas National Guard in its state mission, using funds from a Republican donor.

All of this raises a question: if National Guard members aren’t subject to the orders of defense secretary, and therefore the standards of conduct and readiness required for active duty troops, and they can be mobilized on behalf of a state governor rather than the United States — does it make sense that they all wear U.S. Air Force or U.S. Army tapes on their uniforms?

To the general public, there is no distinction. In practice, there are soldiers and airmen who are subject to different standards at different times, if their governors choose to diverge from Pentagon policy.

“So I hear exactly what you’re saying, and it makes perfectly sound, logical thought,” Robinson, president of NGAUS, said. “But I’ve got to go back and remind you that the primary mission of the Army and Air National Guard is — established over 300 years ago — is that they are the primary combat reserve of the Army and the primary combat reserve of the Air Force.”

Which is to say, according to Robinson, that the National part of the National Guard takes precedence, even if they spend most of their time in a state-controlled capacity.

Exactly, Kuzminski, the CNAS fellow, said. If Guard troops are primarily thought of as a federal force, it would make sense for them to always maintain federal standards.

“The National Guard has been ... used in an unprecedented fashion for the past 20-plus years, and we’ve supported the active duty in two wars, and we continue to do that,” Mancino said. “And yes, I believe that means it may necessitate Congress to look at how we’re structured, right? And to potentially make changes.”

And the controversies of the last few months, along with the end of the war in Afghanistan, might signal a return to that more traditional focus on state activities.

So how does DoD respond to these disparities, if at all? In some ways, the law says that they were always there, but in practice, Guard leaders can of course implement the federal government’s policies. That’s how 46 of the Guard’s 54 states and territories have handled the vaccine mandate so far.

For the others, the only option would be for Congress to step in and amend the law. It might look something like language giving a governor the power to call up troops for state missions, but requiring that troops in any status comply with federal standards.

“The balance between the federal roles and the state roles, and which govern when, is one that is rooted in the Constitution. But also, some of it’s in the agreement that Congress established with the states under Title 32,” Mancino said. “Far be it from me to tell Congress whether it can or can’t do something, but it would not surprise me if maybe many members of Congress want to take a look at this .. If asked my military opinion, I’ll give one to the Congress ... but I don’t make any political statement about whether that’s a good idea or not.”

Reached for comment by Military Times, a Senate aide said there were no hearings or legislative proposals on the horizon that would call into question the current balance of powers between the states and the federal government.

The Supreme Court might be another forum for change.

“I have a feeling there’s some maneuvering behind the scenes to make this a Supreme Court case,” Kuzminski said of the states’ vaccine lawsuits. “But it’ll rely on the strength of the case, which is that your risk of getting COVID is higher in military service.”

And that could set a precedent for whether the federal government gets to enforce the readiness standards of state-controlled National Guardsmen.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/07 Oil prices soar, stocks plunge: uncertainty
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/07/oil-prices-near-all-time-record-as-us-and-europe-consider-ban-on-russian-crude
GIST	<p>Oil prices have soared more than 10% and are closing in on their all-time high levels after the risk of a US and European ban on Russian crude threatened a stagflationary shock for world markets.</p> <p>The global benchmark of Brent crude hit US\$139.13 a barrel at the start of trading on Monday, a leap of more than \$20 on Friday’s close of \$118.03.</p> <p>The all-time of \$147.50 was reached in July 2008 but some analysts think that mark could be surpassed because of the geopolitical impact of the Ukraine crisis.</p> <p>Stock markets headed the opposite way with more big losses when trading began on Monday. The Nikkei in Tokyo was down almost 3%, the Hang Seng was off 3.6% and the Shanghai index had lost 2.3% by 7am GMT. In futures trade, the FTSE100 off 2.6% and the S&P500 down 1.3%.</p> <p>The panic on trading floors sent safe havens sharply higher, with gold hitting as much as \$2,000.86, its highest since mid-2020.</p> <p>Although the oil price slipped back to \$130 after the initial surge, consumers still face higher household energy and petrol costs, while inflation will rise across the board if businesses are forced to pass on higher fuel expenses.</p> <p>The price of natural gas is closely linked to crude oil and is sure to lift again. Gas prices set a new record high mark on Friday in the UK, for example, when national balancing point (NBP) benchmark soared above 500p a therm.</p> <p>Having climbed 21% last week, Brent crude was further energised by the risk of a ban of Russian oil by the US and Europe.</p>

Mohamed El-Erian, chief economist at the insurer Allianz, said that it appeared likely that the new sanctions would be imposed given the continued bombardment of Ukrainian cities.

“It’s hard to see such sanctions not being imposed given the atrocities being committed against Ukraine,” he said on Twitter.

Bank of America chief economist Ethan Harris said cutting off most of Russia’s energy exports would be a “major shock to global markets”, adding that the loss of Russia’s 5m barrels could see oil prices double to \$200 a barrel.

Mike Muller, of commodity trading firm Vitol, also said prices could rise further. “I don’t think we’ve priced in everything yet,” he said.

Commodity prices in general are having their strongest start to any year since 1915, Bank of America said. Among the many movers last week, nickel rose 19%, aluminium 15%, zinc 12%, and copper 8%, while wheat futures surged 60% and corn 15%.

That will only add to the global inflationary pulse with US consumer price data this week expected to show annual growth at a stratospheric 7.9%, and the core measure at 6.4%.

It leaves a tough decision for the European Central Bank when it meets this week against a backdrop of a sharply falling euro.

The nightmare scenario of [stagflation](#) – where inflation combines with stagnating growth – looms for the world economy.

“Given the potential for stagflation is very real, the ECB is likely to maintain maximum flexibility with its [quantitative easing] programme at €20bn through the second quarter and potentially beyond, thus effectively pushing out the timing of rate hikes,” said Tapas Strickland, an economist at NAB.

“Higher inflation forecasts, though, mean rate hikes will be needed on the horizon.”

With the outlook for European growth darkening, the single currency took a beating and fell 3% last week to its lowest since mid-2020. It was last down 0.6% at \$1.0864 and risked testing its 2020 trough of about \$1.0635. It has also lost a lot of ground against the pound, which now buys €1.214.

The dollar was broadly firmer, supported in part by a strong payrolls report which only reaffirmed market expectations for a rate hike from the Federal Reserve this month. The dollar index was last at 98.812 having climbed 2.3% last week.

Gold benefited from its status as one of the oldest of safe harbours and was last up 0.7% at \$1,983 an ounce.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/07 Day 12 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/07/ukraine-war-russia-what-we-know-so-far-day-12-russian-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ukraine’s president Volodymyr Zelenskiy delivered a strident address to his nation on Sunday night, warning Russian troops he will punish those who committed atrocities in Ukraine while saying the “only quiet place” that awaits them is the grave. “We will not forgive. We will not forget. We will punish everyone who committed atrocities in this war on our land.”Zelenskiy spoke of the death of a family who were attempting to flee the Ukrainian city of Irpin, near Kyiv in northern Ukraine, in an emotional plea to honour humanitarian corridors that Russian forces appear to have ignored. Eight civilians were killed in the city as evacuations were under way, according to mayor Oleksandr Markushyn.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ukrainian president criticised western leaders for failing to respond to the Russian defence ministry's announcement that it would strike Ukraine's military-industrial complex. "I didn't hear even a single world leader react to this," he said. "The audacity of the aggressor is a clear signal to the west that the sanctions imposed on Russia are not sufficient." • A plane carrying Russian diplomats expelled by the United States left New York's John F Kennedy International Airport en route to Moscow about 7.30pm EST, according to Flight Radar24 data. • The US does not believe a Russian amphibious assault in or near the Ukrainian city of Odesa is imminent, a senior US defence official said, according to Reuters. There have been growing concerns about a possible attack on the city. • Russia has instructed all state-owned websites and services to switch to the Russian domain name system by 11 March, according to Russian state media outlets. Many fear the move is a sign that Russia is beginning active preparations for disconnection from the global internet. • Meanwhile, hacking collective Anonymous claimed to have hacked into the Russian streaming services Wink and Ivi and live TV channels Russia 24, Channel One and Moscow 24 to broadcast footage from Ukraine. • Ukraine will ask the United Nations' top court on Monday to issue an emergency ruling requiring Russia to stop its invasion, arguing that Moscow's justification for the attack is based on a faulty interpretation of genocide law, Reuters reports. • British prime minister Boris Johnson has pledged to send more defensive equipment and \$100m to Ukraine to hold off Russian troops and mitigate financial pressures facing the country, but was accused of moving too slowly and timidly to clamp down on oligarchs' dirty money in the UK. • The UK's ministry of defence released its latest intelligence report, speculating that Russian forces made "minimal ground advances" over the weekend, while a "high level of Russian air and artillery strikes" continued to hit military and civilian sites across the cities of Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Chernihiv and Mariupol. • Russian gymnast Ivan Kuliak, who sported an insignia linked to the invasion of Ukraine on a medals podium alongside a Ukrainian competitor, has been called out for his "shocking behaviour". • More than 4,300 people have been arrested in Russia after demonstrators took to the streets across 21 cities to condemn Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. • Another round of talks between Ukraine and Russia is due on Monday, according to Ukrainian officials. However, in a phone conversation with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Putin said the conflict would only stop if Ukraine stopped fighting and Russia's demands were met. The Russian president also said Ukraine's negotiators should take a more "constructive" approach in talks with Moscow to take into account the reality on the ground. Ukraine has said it is not willing to compromise on its territorial integrity.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/06 Experts urge: prepare for future outbreaks
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/07/us-covid-future-variants-outbreaks-omicron
GIST	<p>Omicron is receding in the US and states and cities are lifting remaining restrictions. Public health experts, however, are urging leaders to use the lull to prepare for future outbreaks.</p> <p>The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently announced new guidelines for judging community risk, shifting focus from cases to hospitalizations.</p> <p>More than 90% of the US is now at low risk of overwhelming health systems, which means requirements for masks and other precautions can be loosened, the CDC said.</p> <p>Most states and cities had already dropped mask mandates and vaccination requirements or announced plans to end them. Others did so after the change in guidance.</p>

With only 65% of the population fully vaccinated, the US was buffeted by Omicron. It is now seeing an average of 54,000 cases and 1,300 deaths each day.

But cases and hospitalizations are declining very rapidly, which is “reassuring”, said Abraar Karan, an infectious disease physician at Stanford University.

Large swaths of the population have some form of protection from Covid, through vaccination or prior infection or both.

“Even if you pull back on mitigation measures, you may not have a big rise in cases,” Karan said.

But he was also worried that might lull the public and leaders into thinking the pandemic is over.

Officials should use this time to prepare for the next surge and the next variant, which could be more severe or more transmissible, Karan said.

“Once we have another variant, whenever that may be, the amount of spread from that variant will depend on what kind of preparedness we do now. What are we doing to make schools, workplaces and public spaces more safe?”

The US should continue investing in masks, tests, ventilation, vaccination campaigns, wastewater monitoring and other measures to prevent and respond to the next surge, experts said. And when the next wave begins rising, communities should pay careful attention to changing levels of risk.

“We need to expect the unexpected with Covid-19,” said Jason Salemi, an associate professor of epidemiology at the University of South Florida College of Public Health.

The US had limited national precautions throughout the pandemic, with mask mandates for federal buildings and transportation corridors and some restrictions on international travel. Pandemic response has largely fallen instead to states, cities and counties, producing a patchwork set of rules.

Cities like New York, Chicago and Washington are lifting indoor mask mandates and proof of vaccination requirements. Los Angeles, the most populous county in the US, lifted its indoor mask mandate at the end of February, for those who can show proof of vaccination or a negative test. Atlanta and New Orleans also lifted indoor mask mandates.

California, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon and Rhode Island recently lifted or announced plans to lift indoor or school mask mandates. On 26 March, Hawaii will end requirements for travelers to show proof of vaccination or negative tests, or to quarantine.

Businesses may still require masks and proof of vaccination and individuals should mask if they are high-risk or in hospitals or nursing homes, the CDC said. Those who test positive should continue masking regardless of community levels. The CDC is still reviewing federal mask mandates, including on transportation.

The guidelines are intended to show when masks are necessary again, offering a data-driven approach to preventing health systems from being overwhelmed.

“We want to give people a break from things like mask wearing when our levels are low, and then have the ability to reach for them again if things get worse in the future,” the CDC director, Rochelle Walensky, said on a call with reporters.

But there was political pressure to lift pandemic rules, particularly among Democrats looking to the next election, and some public health experts have worried the new guidance doesn’t focus enough on preventing new infections.

	<p>“I’ve seen a lot of people’s very, very legitimate concerns about if you’re focusing on hospitalizations ... it is more of a lagged indicator,” Salemi said. “If there is a new variant that emerges and we start to see infection rates rise, by just focusing on hospitalizations and hospital burden, are we missing an opportunity to act sooner?”</p> <p>The new guidance is more reactive instead of proactive, he said, adding that it also puts the onus on the most vulnerable, including immunocompromised people, to protect themselves from potentially devastating infections.</p> <p>Without more preparation, another surge could be devastating in the US, Karan said.</p> <p>“I’m actually pretty scared that it’s going to be the same thing that happened previously. We’re going to be scrambling to get updated vaccines out, we’re going to be scrambling to get people masks and rapid tests, we’ll be completely overwhelmed because of exponential spread.”</p> <p>That’s why prevention and preparation now are so important, he said.</p> <p>“You don’t prepare for the best-case scenario,” Karan said. “I’m not sitting here with wishful thinking – that’s not a strategy.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 War in Ukraine drives up inflation in US
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-wars-costs-reach-far-shore-to-american-farms-supermarkets-retailers-11646597823?mod=hp_lead_pos3
GIST	<p>Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has set the stage for faster-rising consumer prices, with the mayhem of war driving up manufacturing costs for food, consumer goods and machinery in places far from the battlefield.</p> <p>The conflict is stressing an already strained global supply chain, and its economic impact will likely be felt in households world-wide, at supermarkets, retailers and the gas pump. While higher costs will take time to work their way from producers to consumers, executives and analysts expect the war’s fallout to worsen inflation already stoked by shortages of goods and workers.</p> <p>“It seems to be overshadowing everything now and reversing the improvement that we were seeing,” said Kathy Bostjancic, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics.</p> <p>The short-term consequences have been serious. Grain markets recently hit a 14-year high in anticipation of a diminished harvest in Ukraine, which would raise costs to feed the world’s cattle and poultry.</p> <p>Aluminum prices rose in anticipation of sanctions on Russia, a major supplier of the metal used in soda cans, aircraft and construction, as well as on fears that Moscow could halt exports.</p> <p>Crude oil prices rose 25% last week, to more than \$118 a barrel, the highest level since 2013. Gas prices have gone up an average of 43.7 cents a gallon in the U.S., according to data from price tracker GasBuddy. On Sunday, the national average was \$4.02 a gallon, according to GasBuddy.</p> <p>On Friday, Russia, one of the world’s largest suppliers of fertilizers such as potash and nitrogen, said it could suspend exports. Farmers and consumers will bear the cost of any prolonged shortage.</p> <p>Ingka Group, which owns and operates furniture giant IKEA’s stores, said Thursday that prices would rise more than expected this year after it warned the war in Ukraine was causing serious supply chain disruptions. IKEA said its global prices would rise about 12%, up from earlier estimates of 9%.</p>

Some analysts and company officials caution that it is too early to know exactly what the long-term effects of the war will have on the global economy, and not all think the conflict in Ukraine will have a major impact on supply chains. Businesses have rebounded from global conflicts in the past and can mitigate the effects by finding alternative suppliers elsewhere.

But the invasion of Ukraine has already slowed the journey of goods traveling by various means. Many Western shipping companies are steering clear of Russian ports, an important Asia-to-Europe rail line is used less, much of the Black Sea remains out of bounds and many air cargo flights are either banned from or are avoiding Russian airspace, a key route for goods moving between Europe and Asia. Shipping and airfreight rates have moved higher.

Rising energy and food prices are only the most obvious pressure points for consumers. “Now that we are seeing increases across other commodities, like aluminum, palladium, copper,” Ms. Bostjancic said, “that is going to feed through to some degree to consumer prices as well.”

Ukraine industries, including car-part manufacturers, breweries and an alumina refinery, have halted production. A giant [steel mill owned by ArcelorMittal](#) SA, one of the country’s largest industrial enterprises, closed Thursday. That and other plant closures in the country, along with Russia’s difficulty in getting some of its steel out, are expected to accelerate already rising steel prices.

Companies that use stainless steel and other heat and corrosion-resistant steel alloys containing nickel say they’re bracing for higher prices and the potential for disrupted nickel shipments from Russia, a large exporter.

Nickel also is used in lithium-ion batteries that power consumer electronics and electric vehicles. The price of nickel rose to \$29,800 a metric ton, a 14-year high, up about 19% on the London Metal Exchange since the outbreak of fighting in Ukraine.

Small car-parts plants in Ukraine that supply the broader automotive industry have closed, while [sanctions and severed trade routes](#) are hindering auto-related shipments to and from Russia.

Farm to table

Ukrainian farmers are supposed to plant their spring crops soon. Yet even if the fighting were to stop, they may not have enough fertilizer and pesticides. Agriculture industry executives are warning of smaller yields in Ukraine, which normally has some of the world’s most productive fields.

“Depending on what crop you’re looking at, it could have rather severe impacts already in the first growing season,” said Svein Tore Holsether, chief executive officer of Norway-based [Yara International](#) AS A, one of the world’s largest fertilizer makers. “Yields could drop by 50%.”

Ukraine accounts for 8% and 13%, respectively, of global wheat and corn exports, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture data. “For certain parts of the world it means more expensive food,” Mr. Holsether said. “For other parts of the world, it means access to food, and it’s a matter of life and death.”

In the past month, [wheat futures climbed](#) to a 14-year high and rose more than 40% over the past week. Corn and soybean prices over the past month were up roughly 21% and 15%, respectively.

Higher commodity costs stand to further inflate prices of such pantry staples as cereal and cooking oil, as well as beef and other meat, because producers rely heavily on grain to feed livestock and poultry.

Rising grain and corn costs eliminate some of the hope that inflation could plateau in the second half of the year. Such agricultural commodities are used in nearly all food products, said Ben Bienvenu, a food and agribusiness research analyst at Stephens Inc.

[Hormel Foods](#) Corp. , the owner of food brands including Spam canned meat and Skippy peanut butter, said it expected higher raw material prices from the war in Ukraine. “There will be some disruption now and further down the road,” the company’s Chief Financial Officer Jacinth Smiley said.

James Halverson, a rancher in Beulah, Wyo., and executive director of the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association, said feed costs have jumped in the past week, making it more expensive for ranchers, himself included, to hold on to cattle and negotiate better prices from meatpackers.

If grain costs stay high over the coming months, it will cut into his bottom line, he said, and customers will pay more for meat at the grocery store.

“We’ve seen grain come up,” he said. “That’s the number one cost of feeding cattle.”

Soil supplements

Higher food prices are related to the rising cost of natural gas, one of the main ingredients for nitrogen fertilizers. Ken Seitz, interim chief executive of fertilizer giant [Nutrien](#) Ltd. , said higher gas prices could lead to plant closures in Europe.

The transport of fertilizers, largely on trains and ships, has been difficult since the invasion of Ukraine. Several large shipping companies have temporarily suspended services to Russian ports.

Fertilizer supplies were already tight, and prices have reached record highs. That adds to the pressure on farmers, who are paying significantly more for fuel, weed-killing chemicals, crop seeds and seasonal labor.

If fertilizer supplies run short—or get too expensive—some farmers may shift acres toward less fertilizer-intensive crops such as soybeans. Others could cut back on fertilizers, potentially slimming harvests, analysts said.

Nutrien, the Canada-based company, could produce more potash fertilizer if the global supply problems persist, Mr. Seitz said. But his company could be stuck with unsold quantities should Belarusian and Russian suppliers return to the market.

Farmers are wringing their hands over supplies they will need for spring planting, said Chris Edgington, president of the National Corn Growers Association and an Iowa farmer. “The American farmer is going to get a crop in the ground,” he said. “What it will look like, I can’t tell you.”

Randy Stephens, chief executive of SureGrow Agricultural Products Inc., has a plan to fill orders from his roughly 3,000 customers in Texas. The CEO of the chemical and fertilizer business in Comanche, Texas, says that over the next three months he will be making stops at as many as 15 ports from Houston to Corpus Christi, seeking needed shipments.

Even if he finds enough supply, he said, “I think we can run out really quickly.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Russia shells population centers
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-resumes-evacuation-attempts-as-russia-presses-offensive-11646564330?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos3
GIST	<p>Russian forces intensified strikes across Ukraine, pushing toward the capital, Kyiv, and the country’s second-largest city, Kharkiv, while killing dozens of civilians and disrupting evacuation efforts.</p> <p>After beating off an initial Russian offensive, Ukraine is now preparing for a second wave of Russian attacks focused on major population centers around the country, Ukraine’s national security adviser, Oleksiy Danilov, said in a social-media post Sunday.</p>

The Russian plan, he said, is to encircle Ukrainian forces and “create a situation of humanitarian disaster for the civilian population.”

Officials in Kharkiv said several civilians were killed after a Russian Grad multiple-launch rocket system fired on a line outside a grocery store. Images from the scene showed at least five bodies and streaks of blood on the snow. [Russian airstrikes](#) hit the local TV station, disrupting broadcasts, as well as several residential neighborhoods and government buildings. Kharkiv officials said two Russian bomber jets were downed over the city, providing footage to corroborate their claims.

Around Kyiv, Russian forces engaged in a heavy fight with Ukrainian forces northwest of the capital city, seizing parts of the town of Irpin. As thousands of civilians streamed out of Irpin, [Russian shelling of the evacuation route](#) killed eight people, local authorities said. “We will defend Kyiv at any price,” Mayor Vitali Klitschko said as he visited the city’s defenses Sunday. “The capital of Ukraine today is the outpost of freedom for all of Europe.”

For the second straight day, Russian shelling [disrupted the planned evacuation](#) of some 200,000 civilians from the southeastern city of Mariupol, Kyiv said. Civilians had been expected to start leaving Mariupol and nearby Volnovakha on Saturday in a deal overseen by the International Committee of the Red Cross, in an agreement that was supposed to be a test case for similar humanitarian corridors out of other Ukrainian cities.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Sunday he has “seen very credible reports of deliberate attacks on civilians, which would constitute a war crime.”

Ukrainian and Russian negotiators are scheduled to meet for their third round of cease-fire talks on Monday, even though chances for a breakthrough were uncertain as the Kremlin signaled its determination to pursue the war.

Agreements reached by Ukrainian and Russian negotiators at their previous round of talks on Thursday—to open humanitarian corridors for fleeing civilians—have yet to be implemented.

In a video address Sunday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky again urged the U.S. and allies to enforce a no-fly zone over Ukraine—something the North Atlantic Treaty Organization says it won’t do—or provide the Ukrainian air force with more jet fighters. “If you don’t do that, if you at the very least don’t give us the planes so that we can defend ourselves, there is only one conclusion: You also wish for us to be slowly killed,” he said.

Mr. Blinken said the U.S. government is actively pursuing ways to address [Ukraine’s request for combat jets](#) and to replenish Poland’s arsenal should it hand over Soviet-era planes to its besieged neighbor. He also said the U.S. is talking with European partners about the prospect of [banning the import of Russian oil](#).

French President Emmanuel Macron, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett have engaged in talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in recent days. Mr. Bennett [met with Mr. Putin on Saturday](#), phoned Mr. Zelensky, and then met with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Mr. Putin told Mr. Erdogan on Sunday that Moscow would stop its offensive “only if Kyiv ceases hostilities and fulfills Russia’s well-known demands,” according to the Kremlin’s account of the call. Mr. Putin said he expected Ukrainian negotiators on Monday to take a more constructive approach that takes into account “the emerging realities.” At the outset of the war, Mr. Putin said he was seeking to “demilitarize” Ukraine and end its alignment with the West. He later said Ukraine must recognize the 2014 annexation of its Crimea peninsula by Russia.

Mr. Putin also spoke with Mr. Macron on Sunday, again blaming Kyiv for failed civilian evacuations from Mariupol, according to the Kremlin’s account of the call. Without providing evidence, he said the cease-

fire had been a ploy by Ukraine “to build up forces and means in their positions,” according to the Kremlin.

Messrs. Putin and Macron spoke at length about ensuring the safety of nuclear power plants in Ukraine, after Russian shelling in southern Ukraine sparked a fire at Europe’s largest nuclear power plant on Friday. Mr. Putin said he was willing in principle to hold a trilateral meeting between Russia, Ukraine and the International Atomic Energy Agency by video call or in a third country.

He said Russian troops in cooperation with Ukrainian personnel were working to ensure normal operations and that background radioactivity remained at normal levels. “The physical and nuclear safety of the plant is well protected,” the Kremlin’s readout said.

The U.N. atomic agency said Sunday staff at the nuclear plant were now under orders from the commander of Russian forces there and that communication channels between the plant and Ukraine’s nuclear regulator had been sharply reduced.

“I’m extremely concerned about these developments,” IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said. “In order to be able to operate the plant safely and securely, management and staff must be allowed to carry out their vital duties in stable conditions without undue external interference or pressure.”

Meanwhile, Ukrainians in areas occupied by Moscow came out for new protests on Sunday, demanding that the Russian forces withdraw.

In Kherson, the only regional capital that Russia has conquered since it unleashed the war on Ukraine on Feb. 24, thousands of people came out for the third day of protests against the occupation, waving Ukrainian flags. Other such rallies took place Sunday in the towns of Nova Kakhovka and Kalanchak in the Kherson region. Russian forces in Nova Kakhovka fired volleys into the air and threw flash-bang grenades into the crowd as local residents chanted “Go home!”

In Russia, thousands turned out in dozens of cities to protest the war, the largest demonstrations so far of the daily rallies that have taken place since the invasion began.

Russian police have detained more than 13,000 people since the protests kicked off last month. The Kremlin has banned Facebook and Twitter and shut down independent media to silence dissent against the military operations.

In briefings Sunday, Russian military spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov said Russia’s forces continued to advance on Mariupol.

The Mariupol mayor’s office said the city on the Sea of Azov is now without water, electricity or mobile phone service.

Maj. Gen. Konashenkov said Russia attacked Ukrainian military airfields in Starokostyantyniv and Vinnytsia and that Russia had destroyed nearly all of Ukraine’s military aircraft.

He claimed that Ukrainian jet fighters have flown to Romania and other neighboring countries during the conflict, an action which he said “can be regarded as the involvement of these states in armed conflict.”

Because of fierce Ukrainian resistance, Russian forces have taken unexpectedly heavy casualties, especially in the north where attempts to quickly seize Kyiv and Kharkiv have failed. Russian forces were also repelled over the weekend in the southern city of Mykolayiv. There, regional Gov. Vitaly Kim posted videos of himself driving in a Tigr, the vehicle of choice for Russian reconnaissance forces, with trophy antitank rockets behind him.

	<p>Wounded Ukrainian fighters will be treated in hospitals in Germany and Poland, officials from both countries said Sunday. German hospitals, including military clinics in Berlin, will start treating Ukrainian fighters on Monday, German officials said.</p> <p>More than 1.5 million civilians have left Ukraine since Russia invaded, according to U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, in what he called Sunday the fastest-growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/07 China 'rock solid' ties Russia: mediator?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/07/china-russia-relationship-ukraine/
GIST	<p>China is ready to act as mediator between Ukraine and Russia, the country's foreign minister said on Monday, as he declared Beijing's relationship with Moscow "rock solid" amid international censure of Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>While Beijing has consistently called for a negotiated diplomatic solution to the conflict, the comment was the first time officials had formally confirmed readiness to be directly involved.</p> <p>"China is willing to continue playing a constructive role in urging peace talks and is willing when necessary to work together with the international community to launch required mediation," Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters at his annual news conference, part of the meeting of parliament underway in Beijing.</p> <p>Wang further implied that Chinese President Xi Jinping had encouraged Putin to begin talks when the two spoke by phone on Feb. 25, with Xi expressing China's desire for peace talks to begin "as soon as possible."</p> <p>At the same time, Wang ruled out the possibility that diplomatic fallout from the war could undermine China's growing alignment with Russia.</p> <p>Asked whether the conflict had impacted bilateral ties, Wang said the relationship "is not subject to third-party interference," adding: "No matter how perilous the international situation, China and Russia will ... continuously advance with a new era of comprehensive strategic partnership."</p> <p>Josep Borrell, the European Union's foreign policy chief, said in an interview published Friday that, when it came to mediating a peace deal, "it must be China." He told Spanish newspaper El Mundo: "We have not asked for it nor have they asked for it, but since it has to be a power and neither the U.S. nor Europe can be [mediators], China could be."</p> <p>Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Saturday that Chinese diplomacy had "sufficient tools to make a difference."</p> <p>China officially maintains a position of noninterference in other countries' domestic affairs, making it traditionally reluctant to play an active role beyond disputes that touch on core Chinese interests. In recent years, China has adopted a more active foreign policy stance and positioned itself as a broker in several disputes, including those between Pakistan and Afghanistan or between North and South Korea.</p> <p>Putin's invasion of Ukraine has tested China's deepening strategic partnership with Russia. Beijing speaks of respecting territorial integrity and remaining neutral, while blaming NATO and the United States for instigating the conflict, which it refuses to call an invasion.</p> <p>That implicit defense of Russia has been complicated by Beijing's concern about the safety of Chinese nationals in Ukraine after one was wounded while attempting to flee the country.</p>

	<p>The Chinese Foreign Ministry previously rejected calls from the United States to exert influence over Russia and has denied that Xi asked Putin to delay the assault until after the Beijing Winter Olympics.</p> <p>Biden administration officials said last week that a Western intelligence report indicated that Chinese officials in early February requested a delay until after the Closing Ceremonies.</p> <p>Instead, China claims that Western powers share responsibility and must act to defuse tensions.</p> <p>On Saturday, in a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Wang called on the United States, the E.U. and NATO to “engage in equal-footed dialogue with Russia, face up to the frictions and problems accumulated over the years.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 ‘Aseismic’ creeping San Andreas Fault
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/2022/03/06/san-andreas-fault-earthquakes/
GIST	<p>California’s San Andreas Fault is famous for a reason — nearly 800 miles in length, it caused the notorious 1906 San Francisco Earthquake and could eventually unleash “The Big One.”</p> <p>Its northern and southern tips have long been thought to be much more active, and dangerous, than its supposedly sleepy middle.</p> <p>Turns out that’s not true. A new study in the journal <i>Geology</i> points to evidence of multiple major quakes in the fault’s central section — past temblors that indicate potential future dangers.</p> <p>An international team of researchers analyzed samples of rock core found 1.98 miles beneath the surface of the fault’s central section.</p> <p>There, the fault is different from the two tips of the system. In the north and south, the plates on either side of the fault line have been building up pressure for years. But in the central section, the plates engage in what is known as aseismic creep: a slow, continuous movement that doesn’t build up the same pressures as elsewhere along the fault.</p> <p>To determine whether the creeping area produced past earthquakes, the researchers looked for evidence of past temperature spikes that would have resulted from the “slip” that produces an earthquake.</p> <p>They found signs of more than 100 past quakes, some 6.9-magnitude level or greater. That’s comparable with the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake, which caused 63 deaths, over 3,700 injuries and \$6 billion in damage near San Francisco.</p> <p>The central quakes appear to have happened at least 2,000 years ago, but that doesn’t mean the section won’t produce another large one.</p> <p>Although the evidence points to more danger in the central section of the fault than previously thought, the researchers say it isn’t cause for alarm because of advances in building codes and growing geologic knowledge.</p> <p>It does mean that aseismic creep could produce higher magnitude earthquakes than previously thought — and the new information will help seismologists tweak their hazard assessments.</p> <p>“Seismic events are inevitable,” said geologist Stephen Cox of Columbia University’s Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory in a news release. “Work like this ... helps everyone prepare.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 US, Venezuela discuss easing sanctions
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/venezuela-us-talks-russia/2022/03/06/id/1059920/

U.S. and Venezuelan officials discussed the possibility of easing oil sanctions on Venezuela but made scant progress toward a deal in their first high-level bilateral talks in years, five sources familiar with the matter said, as Washington seeks to separate Russia from one of its key allies.

Both sides used Saturday's meeting in Caracas to present what one of the sources described as "maximalist" demands, reflecting longtime tensions between the Western Hemisphere's main power and one of its biggest ideological foes.

A U.S. delegation led by Juan Gonzalez - the top White House Latin America adviser - and Ambassador James Story held talks at the Miraflores palace with socialist President Nicolas Maduro and his Vice President, Delcy Rodriguez, the sources said.

Roger Carstens, the special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, was also a member of the U.S. group and made the case to the Venezuela government for the release of American citizens and dual nationals held there, including six Citgo executives, according to one person familiar with the matter.

U.S. officials saw the meeting as a chance to gauge whether Venezuela, one of Russia's closest Latin American allies, is prepared to distance itself from President Vladimir Putin over his invasion of Ukraine, a source in Washington said.

Washington also wants to identify alternative oil supplies to fill the gap if it seeks a boycott of Moscow's energy industry. Venezuela could boost crude exports if Washington eases sanctions.

The White House, the U.S. State Department and Venezuela's Information ministry declined comment.

The U.S. willingness to re-engage after years of shunning such contact appeared to be a boost for Maduro.

The meeting came as Venezuela's financial lifeline to Russia is fraying under sanctions on Moscow following its military onslaught in Ukraine, which Russia calls a "special operation." Caracas used the talks to press for U.S. sanctions relief.

Venezuela has asked Russia in recent days to unfreeze oil proceeds at several Russian banks blacklisted by the United States, especially the Promsvyazbank (PSB), where Venezuela's state-run oil company PDVSA and the Defense Ministry have bank accounts, two separate sources said.

In 2019, as part of U.S. sanctions on Venezuela, another bank widely used for trade with Russia, the Evrofinance Mosnarbank, was blacklisted, forcing PDVSA to move its collecting accounts to other banks.

In the talks, Washington sought guarantees of free presidential elections, broad reforms of Venezuela's oil industry to facilitate production and exports by foreign firms and the government's public condemnation of the Ukraine invasion, which Maduro has defended, three people familiar with the matter said.

As a concession, the U.S. officials were willing to consider temporarily allowing Venezuela to use the SWIFT system, which facilitates financial transactions between banks worldwide, to move money to other accounts, one of the sources said.

Maduro sought a total lifting of sanctions prohibiting Venezuela's oil exports, the removal of sanctions on him and other Venezuelan officials and the return to the state's control of PDVSA's U.S. subsidiary Citgo Petroleum, sources said.

Easing oil sanctions could start by allowing companies including U.S. Chevron Corp, India's ONGC and Europeans Eni, Repsol and Maurel & Prom to trade cargoes of Venezuelan oil. Those firms have made separate requests to Biden's administration, but no decisions have been made.

'ANXIOUS FOR SANCTIONS RELIEF'?

	<p>Even if Washington does not accede to Maduro's demands, he could use the U.S. meeting to pressure Russia to allow Venezuelan money to continue flowing, two of the sources said.</p> <p>"Yes, Maduro is anxious for sanctions relief. No, he is not interested in shifting alliances. This is tactical," Eric Farnsworth, head of the Washington office of the Council of the Americas, said on Saturday on Twitter. "(The) U.S. must be clear-eyed about this, not naive."</p> <p>The Caracas meeting was requested by Maduro's government through multinational law firm Dentons, previously used by other state entities for debt negotiations, two of the sources said.</p> <p>A Dentons representative in Caracas did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>The U.S. officials agreed to a follow-up meeting but no date was set, sources said.</p> <p>Aides to Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido were only notified about the meeting on Saturday morning. Guaido was recognized by the United States and dozens of other nations as Venezuela's rightful leader after they dismissed Maduro's 2018 re-election as a sham, but several countries have since dropped their recognition.</p> <p>In the encounter, the U.S. officials reiterated their demand for the release of six former Citgo executives jailed in Venezuela and other detained U.S. nationals, but did not offer any kind of swap involving businessman Alex Saab, a key Maduro ally detained in the United States. Saab's release has been a key demand by Maduro to return to talks with the opposition.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/06 American Express suspends all operations
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/finance/streettalk/american-express-belarus/2022/03/06/id/1059901/
GIST	<p>American Express Co said on Sunday it was suspending all operations in Russia and Belarus, joining a growing number of Western corporations to boycott business there over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>"In light of Russia's ongoing, unjustified attack on the people of Ukraine, American Express is suspending all operations in Russia," the credit card company said in a statement on its website.</p> <p>"We are also terminating all business operations in Belarus," American Express said.</p> <p>American Express follows U.S. counterparts Visa Inc and Mastercard Inc, which announced a suspension of their Russian operations the previous day, as well as payments company PayPal Holdings Inc.</p> <p>American Express said its globally issued cards would no longer work in Russia at merchants or at ATMs. In addition, cards issued by Russian banks in Russia would no longer work outside the country on American Express' network.</p> <p>The company said it has already suspended its relationships with Russian banks affected by U.S. and international sanctions.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/06 Moldova ponders: would Russia stop?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/06/world/europe/ukraine-russia-moldova-transnistria.html
GIST	<p>ON THE DNIESTER RIVER — Just eight miles from the Ukrainian border, the mayor of a village in Moldova watched rolling television coverage of the Russian invasion next door. He fiddled with a pen, removing and replacing its lid, staring at the screen as it showed the Russian advance toward Odessa, the nearest big city on the Ukrainian side.</p> <p>"I can't stop watching," Mayor Alexander Nikitenko said. "If they take Odessa, it's clear they'll come here next."</p>

And if the Russians do get this far, Mr. Nikitenko wondered, would they necessarily stop?

[Such questions](#) are being asked all across Eastern Europe in former Communist republics like Moldova. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has shattered assumptions about the post-Cold War order, providing clear evidence that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia sees Europe's borders as open to being redrawn by force.

A poor country of 2.6 million squeezed between Ukraine and Romania, Moldova is perhaps the most vulnerable. Unlike Poland and the Baltic States, Moldova is not a member of NATO. It is not a member of the European Union either, but submitted a hurried, long-shot application last week, something akin to sending up a flare.

Most problematically, two decades before Russian-speaking separatists carved a chunk out of Ukraine, they did the same thing in Moldova.

In 1992, Moscow-backed separatists took control of a thin 250-mile sliver of land, known as Transnistria, that runs along much of the eastern bank of the Dniester River as well as parts of the western bank.

They also claim pockets of land still controlled by Moldova, including Mr. Nikitenko's village, Varnita.

Transnistria has never been recognized internationally — not even by Russia. But Russia keeps 1,500 soldiers there, nominally to keep the peace and guard a huge Soviet-era munitions cache.

If Russian forces advance to the Moldovan border, some Moldovans fear that Russia will soon either recognize Transnistria, much as it did with Ukraine's self-declared separatist republics — giving Moscow a similar pretext to officially occupy it — and perhaps even later absorb it into either a pro-Russian Ukraine or Russia itself.

Arrows on a map of Ukraine presented at a televised briefing about the Russian invasion last Tuesday by the Belarusian president, Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, suggested that Russian troops in Ukraine planned to enter Transnistria after capturing Odessa. The Belarusian ambassador to Moldova later apologized for Mr. Lukashenko's map, claiming it was a mistake.

Within the Moldovan government, senior officials have discreetly discussed concerns that Russia might occupy Moldova entirely, two Moldovan officials said on condition of anonymity.

"People are scared, literally scared," said Alexandru Flenchea, an analyst and former deputy prime minister of Moldova, who oversaw efforts to reintegrate Transnistria. "Many are considering emigration, before they might themselves become refugees."

No European can feel safe today, particularly after Mr. Putin instructed his army to ready Russia's nuclear arsenal, Mr. Flenchea said.

"But of all countries, except the aggressors themselves, Moldova is the country that is closest to the military action," Mr. Flenchea added.

Though small and impoverished, Moldova has historically been a bellwether for power dynamics in Eastern Europe. In little more than two centuries, the country has formed part of the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Romania and the Soviet Union.

Along the Dniester River, that complex history, coupled with the combustible nature of the current moment, has prompted expectations of a coming power shift.

The Dniester may now become the border between Russia and the West, said Sergei Shirokov, a Transnistria-based political analyst and former Transnistrian official. “Will that border be an iron curtain?” Mr. Shirokov asked. “Or will it be a flexible border?”

Josep Borrell Fontelles, the European Union’s top diplomat, visited Moldova last Wednesday in a show of support, while Antony J. Blinken, the United States secretary of state, visited on Sunday.

“We strongly support Moldova’s territorial integrity,” Mr. Blinken said in a joint press briefing with the Moldovan president, Maia Sandu.

In the short term, some have speculated that either Transnistrian forces or the Russian troops in Transnistria may be sucked into the fighting themselves, to aid Russia’s campaign in southwest Ukraine. On Friday evening, a news agency run by the Transnistrian authorities said a missile had hit a Ukrainian railroad line close to Transnistria, highlighting the risk of military spillover. On Sunday a television channel run by the Ukrainian defense ministry claimed that recent Russian strikes on a Ukrainian airport had been fired from Transnistria. Both the Moldovan government and the Transnistrian authorities denied the report.

As recently as Sunday morning, Moldovan officials and foreign diplomats said there was no evidence the Transnistrian leadership was seeking to involve itself in the fighting. Ms. Sandu, Moldova’s president, said on Sunday that the Russian invasion had left the country feeling unsafe. But she and other Moldovan officials have otherwise tried to avoid inflaming tensions. In parliamentary elections last year, about a third of Moldovans voted for parties supportive of Russia.

In an interview, the Moldovan prime minister, Natalia Gavrilita, said her government faced more pressing challenges — such as the sudden influx of more than 230,000 refugees. There are almost no free hotel beds in Chisinau, the Moldovan capital, and many refugees are staying in makeshift camps and the homes of ordinary Moldovans.

“We are a neutral country, we have always acted through the prism of neutrality, and we fully expect others to do so,” said Ms. Gavrilita. “We don’t see an imminent danger” of Transnistria joining the war, she added. “This is, for now, a hypothetical question.”

The Transnistrian leader, Vadim Krasnoselsky, declined an interview request; the head of Transnistria’s external affairs department, Vitaly Ignatiev, declined to comment when reached by phone; and the Transnistrian authorities also denied entry permits to The New York Times.

In recent public statements, however, the Transnistrian leadership has sought to downplay any tensions.

Any reports of Transnistrian aggression were a “shameless lie,” Mr. Krasnoselsky said in a statement Sunday afternoon. Transnistria “does not pose a military threat, does not hatch plans of an aggressive nature,” he added. “We are focused on ensuring peace.”

Recent military exercises by the Transnistrian security forces have been defensive, also suggesting they are not training for a campaign in Ukraine, Mr. Flenchea said, citing recent statements by Transnistrian officials.

While Transnistria seeks independence from Moldova, the two have established a functional if uneasy relationship.

Transnistria has its own flag, complete with a Soviet-style hammer and sickle, and its own makeshift currency that partly consists of plastic coins reminiscent of a board game. At a local level, Moldovan and Transnistrian communities are often interdependent, and Transnistrians often use banks and medical centers in Moldovan-controlled towns.

At the school in Mr. Nikitenko's village, about a third of the students are from an adjacent Transnistrian municipality. During recent snowfall, Mr. Nikitenko shared snow plows with that neighboring municipality, and firefighters from both towns joined forces to put out a recent dumpster fire, Mr. Nikitenko said.

Any disruption to the status quo would risk upsetting Transnistrian trade and food supply, much of which is reliant on Moldova, Ukraine and the European Union. It could also endanger one of Transnistria's main revenue streams — the fees it collects from Moldova for the electricity that Transnistria supplies to Chisinau.

Transnistrians lining up to withdraw cash in Varnita expressed little enthusiasm for a new armed conflict.

"I want Transnistria to be independent," said Anastasia Secretariova, a 31-year-old homemaker standing in line. "But what Putin did made everything worse."

Ms. Secretariova's heart sank at the thought of her 3-year-old twins growing up to fight in "a war without any purpose," she said. Her friends enlisted in the local Russian-led forces also have little appetite for more fighting, Ms. Secretariova added. "They just want to live in peace."

Ultimately, though, the residents of Transnistria will have little say over what happens here, said Mr. Shirokov, the Transnistrian analyst and former official.

"The Eurasian continent is being reshaped," Mr. Shirokov said. "Whether it's Russia alone that reshapes our future, or both Russia and America, we don't know. But what is clear is that it won't be our own hands that will be influencing things."

Regardless of what happens in Ukraine, Russia might still seek to preserve the status quo in Transnistria, a Moldovan official said. A Transnistria that remains part of Moldova might be more useful to Russia, since it would continue to complicate any Moldovan aspirations to integrate with the West, the official added.

And whatever happens to Transnistria, the war in Ukraine will set off a host of challenges for Moldova, said the Moldovan foreign minister, Nicu Popescu.

The conflict has already ruined Moldova's eastern trade routes and presented it with a refugee crisis that would drain far more developed countries, Mr. Popescu said.

In the longer term, it will cause a proliferation of weapons throughout Eastern Europe, aiding organized crime networks and undermining investor confidence, while the cost of reconstruction will also siphon off international funds.

"The war will cause at least a lost decade," said Mr. Popescu. "Not only in Moldova, but in the entire region."

But in the office of Mr. Nikitenko, the village mayor, even the idea of an independent Moldova felt far too optimistic.

Mr. Nikitenko still hoped the Russians would stop at the Dniester.

But he feared they would push westward to the Prut River, on Moldova's western border with Romania.

"You can't rule it out," said Mr. Nikitenko, still fiddling with his pen. "If Putin wants to reinstate the Soviet Union, he'll go all the way to the Prut."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Russia intense shelling Mariupol
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/06/world/europe/russia-ukraine-invasion.html

KYIV, Ukraine — As Russia pursued its war against Ukraine in the face of determined resistance, a planned cease-fire and evacuation of civilians from Mariupol — a port city of a half-million people on Ukraine's southeastern coast — was halted for a second consecutive day on Sunday amid "intense shelling" by Russian forces that have encircled the city, the mayor's office said.

Civilians trying to leave Kyiv and the nearby town of Irpin also came under fire from Russian forces. Mortar shells fired at a battered bridge used by people fleeing the fighting [killed a mother and her two children](#), as well as a family friend helping them leave.

Mariupol, across the country from Kyiv, is a key objective in the Russians' effort to cut Ukraine off from the Sea of Azov and create a land bridge to Crimea. Residents are facing increasingly dire conditions in the city, which has been deprived of food, heat and electricity for days as Russian forces shell the town.

Although Russia had announced a temporary pause in fighting in some combat zones to allow civilians to flee, its continued shelling around evacuation paths made the notion of a cease-fire all but meaningless. And away from the front lines, the Russians were continuing to target civilian areas.

President Vladimir V. Putin put the blame on Ukraine in a telephone call with President Emmanuel Macron of France. Mr. Putin claimed that "Ukrainian nationalists" prevented civilians and foreign citizens from leaving Mariupol and neighboring Volnovakha despite a cease-fire announcement.

Mr. Putin denied that Russian forces were targeting civilians and vowed to reach all of his goals "through negotiation or war," the French presidency said in a statement.

On the 11th day of the war, Russian forces continued to move slowly to try to encircle the capital, Kyiv, and to block a large part of Ukraine's army east of the Dnieper River, preventing it from aiding in the defense of the city.

At least 364 civilians are confirmed to have been killed in Ukraine since Russian troops invaded on Feb. 24, and 759 others have been wounded, although the true numbers are probably "considerably higher," a United Nations monitoring mission of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said on Sunday.

Outside Kyiv, desperate people tried to flee the town of Irpin, some so traumatized that emergency medical personnel were handing out cups of water laced with drops of barbiturates.

"Everybody is in a state of shock," Dr. Natasha Demchevska said as she shook drops from a bottle of sedatives into plastic cups.

Lidya Polozuko, 59, a kindergarten teacher, said she had made her way through Irpin for 90 minutes, ducking between buildings to dodge fighting. "I saw Russian tanks in the town," she said, adding, "All of this is because of Putin. I fear him and I am angry at him."

More than 1.5 million Ukrainians have left the country in the fastest-growing refugee crisis since World War II, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, said after visiting the Moldovan border. He warned that the situation would only worsen.

In a video address, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, reiterated his impassioned request for Western allies to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine. "The world is strong enough to close our skies," he said. But NATO has ruled out any direct military confrontation with Russia because it could engender a much wider war.

Petro Poroshenko, the former president of Ukraine and erstwhile rival to Mr. Zelensky before the war, also called on the West to provide a no-fly zone over Ukraine and said the battle with Russia was the beginning of a third world war. In an interview from Kyiv, Mr. Poroshenko said that Mr. Putin "has declared war on the collective West." He said that Ukraine was fighting for everyone who believes in democracy and the rule of law and that the country deserved more help.

Mr. Putin “wants to destroy the West, which is to destroy NATO” and the European Union “and to turn back history to 1991,” Mr. Poroshenko said.

Ukraine is fighting for its freedom and democracy, “but now we are fighting for the U.S., we are fighting for the U.K., fighting for the E.U.,” he said. “Nobody should have any illusion, because if Ukraine falls, Putin will go further. And everybody should understand that Putin will go as far as we allow him to go.”

Mr. Zelensky encouraged citizens to keep fighting. “The Ukraine that we know, love and protect will not give up to the enemy,” he said. “It takes a special heroism to protest when your city is occupied, even temporarily.” In Kherson and other, smaller towns like nearby Nova Kakhovka, Kalanchak, Berdyansk and Melitopol, just north of Crimea, there have been protests against the Russian occupiers.

Mr. Zelensky also had a warning for the residents of Odessa, a major port on the Black Sea in western Ukraine. “They are preparing to bomb Odessa,” he said. “Russians have always come to Odessa, always felt in Odessa only warmth, only sincerity. And now what? Bombs against Odessa, artillery against Odessa, missiles against Odessa. It will be a war crime.”

Ukrainian forces appear to have beaten back a Russian advance on Mykolaiv, a key city between Odessa and Kherson, a smaller port that Russian forces took several days ago. Russia’s advances in the south, spreading out from Crimea, which it annexed in 2014, aim to cut Ukraine’s access to both the Azov and Black Seas.

As the war ground on, it was analyzed by Gen. Thierry Burkhard, the chief of France’s defense staff. He admitted that American intelligence had been correct that Russia would invade Ukraine, while “our services rather thought that the conquest of Ukraine would have a monstrous cost and that the Russians had other options” to bring down Mr. Zelensky’s government, [he told Le Monde](#).

Even if the war takes longer and becomes more brutal, General Burkhard said, “the risk is that the Russian steamroller” will eventually crush the Ukrainian military in a matter of weeks or months, depending on how well organized the Ukrainian resistance is. “The Russians are aiming to chop up the Ukrainian Army,” he said.

The Russians are trying to block the eastern army from crossing the Dneiper River and aiding Kyiv. But to do that, General Burkhard said, “the Russians will have to engage the second echelon of their forces,” which they probably did not plan to do. The Russian forces also show some shakiness in their willingness to fight, he said.

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken visited Ukrainian evacuees at the Polish border on Saturday and in Moldova on Sunday. He promised President Maia Sandu of Moldova that the United States would rally international opposition to Russian aggression “whenever and wherever” it occurs.

“In this region, of course, there is no possibility for us now to feel really safe or secure,” Ms. Sandu said. Moldova is a neutral country but is coping with its own breakaway, [the pro-Russian region of Transnistria](#). Like Ukraine, Moldova is not a member of NATO and has aspirations to join the European Union. It says that more than 230,000 refugees have already come from Ukraine and that some 120,000 of those remain in the country of about 2.5 million people.

Mr. Blinken also confirmed reports that the United States was discussing with Poland how to supply Soviet-era fighter jets to Ukraine, with American F-16s going to Poland to replace them, after pleas from Mr. Zelensky for jets that Ukrainian pilots know how to fly.

“We are looking actively now at the question of airplanes that Poland may provide to Ukraine and looking at how we might be able to backfill, should Poland decide to supply those planes,” Mr. Blinken said. “I can’t speak to a timeline, but I can just say we’re looking at it very, very actively.”

But Polish officials seemed less than enthusiastic. After President Andrzej Duda said last week that Poland would not supply planes, the office of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki wrote on Twitter on Sunday: “Poland won’t send its fighter jets to #Ukraine as well as allow to use its airports. We significantly help in many areas.”

And Moscow warned against the idea, threatening countries that allow the Ukrainian military to use their airfields.

Over the past week, the United States, Europe and others have frozen hundreds of billions of dollars of Russian assets, removed Russian banks from a system that enables international payments and erected steep barriers to investment in Russia. Businesses are pulling out at an ever-accelerating pace, the Moscow stock market has yet to reopen, the ruble has plunged and residents face the prospect of severe shortages. On Sunday, the credit card company American Express suspended its operations in Russia, a day after Visa and Mastercard did the same.

In Russia, the crackdown on independent media continued as BBC World News was taken off the air and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the U.S.-funded media outlet founded during the Cold War, announced that it would cease operations there.

But thousands of Russians braved the police and rallied across the country on Sunday against the war in Ukraine, despite the threat of long prison terms. The rights group OVD Info reported that at least 1,950 people were arrested on Sunday in 44 cities, bringing the total number of Russians arrested at antiwar protests since Feb. 24 to more than 10,000.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Ukraine troops hold Russia assault at bay
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/06/world/europe/ukraine-beats-russia-mykolaiv.html
GIST	<p>MYKOLAIV, Ukraine — The remains of a Russian Tigr fighting vehicle sat smoldering on the side of the road, as Ukrainian troops lounged outside their trenches smoking cigarettes. Nearby, a group of local villagers was tinkering with a captured T-90 tank, trying to get it running again so that the Ukrainian Army might put it to use.</p> <p>For three days, Russian forces had fought to take Mykolaiv, but by Sunday, Ukrainian troops had driven them back from the city limits and retaken the airport, halting the Russian advance along the Black Sea, at least temporarily. By Monday morning Russian forces had resumed their attack.</p> <p>“Few expected such strength from our people because, when you haven’t slept for three days, and when you only have one dry ration because the rest burned up, when it’s negative temperature out and there is nothing to warm you, and when you are constantly in the fight, believe me, it is physically very difficult,” an exhausted Col. Sviatoslav Stetsenko, of the Ukrainian Army’s 59th Brigade, said in an interview. “But our people endured this.”</p> <p>Taking Mykolaiv remains a key objective for Russian forces, and the thwomp of artillery in the distance on Sunday suggested that the Ukrainians had not pushed them back that far. But the unexpected Ukrainian success of defending this critical port, about 65 miles from Odessa, underscores two emerging trends in the war.</p> <p>Russia’s failure to seize Mykolaiv and other cities quickly, as President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia appears to have intended, is largely a function of its military’s faltering performance. Russian forces have suffered from logistical snafus, baffling tactical decisions and low morale.</p> <p>But it is the fierce and, according to many analysts, unexpectedly capable defense by Ukrainian forces, who are significantly outgunned, that has largely stalled the Russian advance and, for now, prevented Mykolaiv from falling into Russian hands.</p>

For three days, troops from the Ukrainian Army's 59th Brigade, together with other military and territorial defense units, have been defending Mykolaiv from Russian attack along several fronts, facing down punishing artillery barrages, helicopter attacks and rocket strikes, some of which have hit civilian neighborhoods.

Civilians elsewhere in Ukraine on Sunday bore the brunt of an unrelenting Russian assault. For the second day in a row, Ukrainians were unable to escape from the besieged southern city of Mariupol amid heavy Russian shelling despite efforts to negotiate a cease-fire. And civilians trying to leave Kyiv, the capital, and the nearby town of Irpin also came under attack by Russian forces. Mortar shells fired at a battered bridge used by people fleeing the fighting killed four people, including a woman and her two children.

Mr. Putin, in a phone call with President Emmanuel Macron of France, denied that Russian forces were targeting civilians and vowed to reach all of his goals "through negotiation or war," according to the French.

That the Ukrainian forces still exist and are able to mount a defense after 11 days of war is by itself a major feat. Most military analysts and even some Ukrainian generals predicted that if Russia mounted a full-scale invasion, Ukraine's military, which is dwarfed by its counterpart by almost every measure, would not last more than a few days or even hours. But by taking advantage of their local knowledge, attacking lumbering Russian troop columns with small, lithe units and using Western military assistance like antitank grenades to maximum effect, Ukrainian forces have managed to slow, if not stop, the Russian advance.

"We fight them day and night; we don't let them sleep," said Maj. Gen. Dmitry Marchenko, the commander of forces defending Mykolaiv. "They get up in the morning disoriented, tired. Their moral psychological state is simply broken."

The governor of the Mykolaiv region, Vitaliy Kim, said that Russian forces were surrendering in unexpected numbers and had abandoned so much equipment that he did not have enough military and municipal workers to collect it all.

"We're in a good mood now," he said.

The time for such attitudes may be limited. A senior Ukrainian military official, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military assessments, said that Russian forces outside Mykolaiv appeared to be regrouping and preparing for a counterattack, possibly with more firepower. Russia still has many more troops and advanced weapons than Ukraine, and its air force now dominates the skies.

Despite near-frantic warnings from the White House of an imminent Russian invasion in the weeks before it actually happened on Feb. 24, the initial attack took Colonel Stetsenko's unit by surprise, he said. His brigade was at a training exercise near the border with Crimea outside a town called Oleshky and only half assembled when it received the order to prepare for battle.

"If we had received the order three or four days before, we could have prepared, dug trenches," he said.

That delay nearly led to his brigade's destruction in the first hours of the war, he said.

The Russian force that poured out of Crimea was five times the size of his Ukrainian unit and quickly overwhelmed it. His brigade had no air support and few functional anti-aircraft systems, because most had been sent to Kyiv to defend the capital. Much of the brigade's tanks and armored fighting vehicles were destroyed in the initial attack by Russian aviation.

The brigade's commander, Col. Oleksandr Vinogradov, had lost touch with military leadership and was forced to make decisions on the fly, said Colonel Stetsenko, who was with the commander throughout. Encircled and suffering heavy losses from strikes by Russian fighter jets, Colonel Vinogradov ordered his

remaining tank and artillery units to punch a hole through a unit of Russian airborne assault troops that had positioned itself at the Ukrainian brigade's rear.

The maneuver allowed the main Ukrainian fighting force to cross a bridge over the Dnieper River and retreat west about 45 miles to Mykolaiv, where it could regroup and link up with other units to continue the fight.

"The fighter jets of the enemy attacked our tanks, several tanks were hit and burned, and the rest remained and did not flee," Colonel Stetsenko said. "They knew that behind them were other people, and they gave up their lives to break through the bridge to dig in on the other bank."

The tactic worked, but the costs were steep. By falling back to Mykolaiv, Colonel Stetsenko's brigade had to sacrifice Kherson, which on March 2 became the first major city to fall to the Russian forces. They had no choice, Colonel Stetsenko said. If they had tried to defend Kherson, Russian forces could have flanked them and cut them off, opening a road to the west, and to Odessa.

With a white, closely trimmed beard and deep crevices around his mouth where dimples might once have been, Colonel Stetsenko cuts an unusual figure on the battlefield. He is 56 and had been retired from the military for a decade when he decided to re-enlist in 2020. By then, Ukrainian forces were already fighting a Kremlin-backed insurgency in eastern Ukraine, and Colonel Stetsenko felt he needed to do his part.

"I knew that many people who had already served were tired," he said. "It is difficult to live for so long without their families, and we needed people to serve. So I went to the military recruiting center and signed a contract."

Such dedication goes some way to explaining the fierce resistance displayed by Ukrainian soldiers on the battlefield, as Russian troops seem to be surrendering in large numbers. An acute knowledge of the Russian military gives the Ukrainian forces another advantage.

Colonel Stetsenko served with Russians as a young soldier in the Soviet military in the 1980s, when he was posted to the Far East. Now, soldiers based at some of the same Russian garrisons where he spent his youth are fighting against him.

"They are now my enemy," he said. "And each one of them who comes here with arms, who comes here as an invader, I will do everything I can to ensure that he remains as fertilizer for our land."

On Sunday evening, Colonel Stetsenko returned to the front line outside the city where the sounds of battle swelled once more as Russian troops regrouped for a counterattack. That has been the way of this war, nearly a week and a half in, a violent ebb and flow that has centered on a few key cities like Kyiv and Kharkiv.

In Mykolaiv, Colonel Stetsenko and his comrades won the city a day of rest. The sun came out for a few hours in the morning, followed by a light snow in the afternoon. Streets that were deserted a few days ago were populated again with mothers pushing strollers and people walking dogs.

On the outskirts where fighting had been most intense, Nikolai Bilyashchat, 54, had joined a few of his neighbors to work on the Russian T-90 tank, which now sported a Ukrainian flag. It had been damaged when Ukrainian forces blew up the bridge it was driving over, and now only the treads on its left side worked properly.

"I've been a driver my whole life, so I know a little bit about mechanics," Mr. Bilyashchat said. "Though I don't know a thing about tanks."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Women's marches gain steam in Pakistan
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/06/world/asia/pakistan-aurat-march-women.html

KARACHI, Pakistan — The reaction to Pakistan's first women's march was relatively mild: criticism and condemnation from Islamist parties and conservatives, who called the participants "anti-religion" and "vulgar."

That did not deter the organizers of the 2018 march in Karachi, the significance of which reverberates to this day.

What started as a single demonstration to observe International Women's Day has become an annual lightning rod for religious conservatives across Pakistan, who have been adopting harsher attitudes toward female activists. Now, as women prepare to march on Tuesday in Karachi and other cities, powerful figures in Pakistan want the event banned altogether.

Women planning to join the Aurat Marches, as they are called — Urdu for "women's march" — have faced countless threats of murder and rape, along with accusations that they receive Western funding as part of a plot to promote obscenity in Pakistan.

"The growing uneasiness surrounding Aurat March every year shows that the campaign for women's rights has been making an impact," said Sheema Kermani, one of the march's founders.

Last year, opposition peaked when Islamist groups demonstrated in major cities, accusing the marchers of using blasphemous slogans — a crime punishable by death in Pakistan, accusations of which have provoked lynchings and murders. The Pakistani Taliban have ominously warned the marchers to "fix their ways."

The first Aurat March was organized by a small group of women in the port city of Karachi, who hoped to draw attention to the violence, inequality and other challenges faced by women across the country.

"We had held discussions and mobilized women in various communities, collected funds by small contributions from individuals, and wrote a manifesto to articulate demands related to women's bodily rights to the government and Pakistani society," Ms. Kermani said.

It worked. On March 8, 2018, the march drew thousands to the grassy grounds of Frere Hall, a majestic monument in Karachi dating from the British colonial era.

It also inspired women in other Pakistani cities, like Lahore and Islamabad. Since then, Aurat Marches have been held annually in major urban centers.

Analysts said the success of the first march made it a polarizing event in Pakistan, even as it advanced the possibilities of women's activism in the Muslim-majority nation.

"Younger feminists who were inspired by a series of global women's marches took their rage against violence, moral policing and lack of bodily or sexual choices for women and marginalized genders to the streets," said Afiya Shehribano Zia, the author of a book on feminism and Islam in Pakistan.

Girls brought placards proclaiming, "My body, my choice," and performed an Urdu version of a Chilean protest song, "A Rapist in Your Path," that assails rape culture and victim-shaming.

"There was nothing subtle about their slogans and banners from the first march," Ms. Zia said, noting that the protesters had even highlighted L.G.B.T.Q. rights, a bold move in Pakistan.

As the event grew bigger over the years, marchers started raising even more sensitive issues, including abortion rights. Pakistan's abortion rate is among the highest in the world; women who end their pregnancies often do so themselves, because many doctors refuse to perform the procedure on religious and cultural grounds.

Some Islamist parties responded to the marches' growing popularity by organizing their own "modesty march." In 2020, conservatives filed court petitions in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the Aurat Marches. That same year, a group of students and supporters of the Lal Masjid, the mosque at the center of a bloody 2007 clash between militant Islamists and the army, assaulted marchers in Islamabad.

After last year's march, opponents doctored footage to make it appear that marchers had used blasphemous slogans, then circulated the faked videos on social media. A newspaper published a front-page story that referred to the marchers as prostitutes.

Pakistan's minister for religious affairs, Noorul Haq Qadri, has spoken out against the Aurat March, claiming it violates the principles of Islam. He recently asked Prime Minister Imran Khan to declare March 8 to be International Hijab Day.

And some Islamist parties have threatened further violence. "The marchers spread obscenity in the name of women's rights," said Abdul Majeed Hazarvi, a leader of the Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam-Fazl party in Islamabad. "If the government allows the march, we will use a baton to stop it."

Kiran Masih, 46, a Christian nurse with two daughters, has joined an Aurat March for the past two years, bringing a placard that reads, "Save our daughters."

"As a minority, we feel increasingly insecure," Mrs. Masih said. "At the workplace, we fear anyone can harm us on the false allegations of blasphemy, and at our homes, we fear that our daughters could be kidnapped and converted to Islam."

Last year, at least 84 people were accused of breaking Pakistan's blasphemy laws, and three people suspected of doing so were killed by mobs, according to the Center for Social Justice, a Lahore-based organization that campaigns for the rights of minority groups.

The Aurat marchers have claimed victories. They campaigned against the physically intrusive "virginity tests" often inflicted on women who bring accusations of rape, and a court in the northern city of Lahore banned them last year. The government has also passed a measure allowing the chemical castration of convicted rapists, another demand of the marchers.

But the increasingly aggressive opposition has left some march organizers fearing for their lives. Many have deactivated their social media accounts. Still, they are undaunted.

"We were and are scared, but we know that without putting ourselves in such a dangerous situation we cannot bring change," Ms. Kermani said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 US, NATO arm Ukraine: air, land
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/06/us/politics/us-ukraine-weapons.html
GIST	<p>On a snowy tarmac at Amari Air Base in northern Estonia on Sunday morning, pallets of rifles, ammunition and other weapons were being loaded onto one of the largest cargo planes in the world, an Antonov AN-124, belonging to the Ukrainian air force. It is an artifact of the Cold War, built and purchased when Ukraine was still part of the Soviet Union.</p> <p>Now it is being turned back against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, part of a vast airlift that American and European officials describe as a desperate race against time, to get tons of arms into the hands of Ukrainian forces while their supply routes are still open. Scenes like this, reminiscent of the Berlin airlift — the famed race by the Western allies to keep West Berlin supplied with essentials in 1948 and 1949 as the Soviet Union sought to choke it off — are playing out across Europe.</p> <p>In less than a week, the United States and NATO have pushed more than 17,000 antitank weapons, including Javelin missiles, over the borders of Poland and Romania, unloading them from giant military</p>

cargo planes so they can make the trip by land to Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital, and other major cities. So far, Russian forces have been so preoccupied in other parts of the country that they have not targeted the arms supply lines, but few think that can last.

But those are only the most visible contributions. Hidden away on bases around Eastern Europe, forces from United States Cyber Command known as “cybermission teams” are in place to interfere with Russia’s digital attacks and communications — but measuring their success rate is difficult, officials say.

In Washington and Germany, intelligence officials race to merge satellite photographs with electronic intercepts of Russian military units, strip them of hints of how they were gathered, and beam them to Ukrainian military units within an hour or two. As he tries to stay out of the hands of Russian forces in Kyiv, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine travels with encrypted communications equipment, provided by the Americans, that can put him into a secure call with President Biden. Mr. Zelensky used it Saturday night for a 35-minute call with his American counterpart on what more the U.S. can do in its effort to keep Ukraine alive without entering into direct combat on the ground, in the air or in cyberspace with Russian forces.

Mr. Zelensky welcomed the help so far, but repeated the criticism that he has made in public — that the aid was wildly insufficient to the task ahead. He asked for a no-fly zone over Ukraine, a shutdown of all Russian energy exports and a fresh supply of fighter jets.

It is a delicate balance. On Saturday, while Mr. Biden was in Wilmington, Del., his National Security Council staff spent much of the day trying to find a way for Poland to transfer to Ukraine a fleet of well-used, Soviet-made MIG-29 fighter jets that Ukrainian pilots know how to fly. But the deal is contingent on giving Poland, in return, far more capable, American-made F-16s, an operation made more complicated by the fact that many of those fighters are promised to Taiwan — where the United States has greater strategic interests.

Polish leaders have said there is no deal, and are clearly concerned about how they would provide the fighters to Ukraine and whether doing so would make them a new target of the Russians. The United States says it is open to the idea of the plane swap.

“I can’t speak to a timeline, but I can just tell you that we’re looking at it very, very actively,” Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said on Sunday, during a trip that has taken him to Moldova, another non-NATO country that American officials fear may be next on Russian President Vladimir V. Putin’s hit list of nations to bring back into Moscow’s sphere of influence.

And in downtown Washington, lobbying groups and law firms that once charged the Ukrainian government handsomely for their services are now working for free, helping Mr. Zelensky’s embattled government plead for more sanctions on Russia.

The Ukrainians are also asking for more money for weapons, though they reject the idea that Washington is manipulating Mr. Zelensky’s image to present him as Churchill in a T-shirt, rallying his country to war. Covington & Burling, a major law firm, filed a motion pro bono on behalf of Ukraine in the International Court of Justice.

It is, in many ways, a more complex effort than the Berlin airlift three-quarters of a century ago. West Berlin was a small territory with direct air access. Ukraine is a sprawling country of 44 million from which Mr. Biden has pulled all American forces in an effort to avoid becoming a “co-combatant” in the war, a legal term that governs how far the United States can go in helping Ukraine without being considered in direct conflict with a nuclear-armed Russia.

But as the weapons flow in and if efforts to interfere in Russian communications and computer networks escalate, some U.S. national security officials say they have a foreboding that such conflict is increasingly likely. The American legal definitions of what constitutes entering the war are not Mr. Putin’s definitions,

one senior American national security official warned over the weekend, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the American overt and covert efforts to aid Ukraine.

Mr. Putin warned on Saturday that any nation that attempted to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine would be “participating in the armed conflict.” On Sunday the Russian ministry of defense issued a statement warning NATO countries like Romania against allowing their bases to be used as a safe haven for the remaining planes in the Ukrainian air force. If they do so, it said, any “subsequent use against the Russian armed forces can be regarded as the involvement of these states in an armed conflict.”

Two decades ago this month, as American forces began to flow into Iraq, Gen. David H. Petraeus famously asked, “Tell me how this ends.” In the case of Ukraine, a senior American official said, the question resonating around the White House is more like: “Tell me how we don’t get sucked in to a superpower conflict.”

A Flow of Arms Becomes a Torrent

To understand the warp-speed nature of the arms transfers underway now, consider this: A \$60 million arms package to Ukraine that the U.S. announced last August was not completed until November, the Pentagon said.

But when the president approved \$350 million in military aid on Feb. 26 — nearly six times larger — 70 percent of it was delivered in five days. The speed was considered essential, officials said, because the equipment — including anti-tank weapons — had to make it through western Ukraine before Russian air and ground forces started attacking the shipments. As Russia takes more territory inside the country, it is expected to become more and more difficult to distribute weapons to Ukrainian troops.

Within 48 hours of Mr. Biden approving the transfer of weapons from U.S. military stockpiles on Feb. 26, the first shipments, largely from Germany, were arriving at airfields near Ukraine’s border, officials said.

The military was able to push those shipments forward quickly by tapping into pre-positioned military stockpiles ready to roll onto Air Force C-17 transport planes and other cargo aircraft, and flying them to about half a dozen staging bases in neighboring countries, chiefly in Poland and Romania.

Still, the resupply effort faces stiff logistical and operational challenges.

“The window for doing easy stuff to help the Ukrainians has closed,” said Maj. Gen. Michael S. Repass, a former commander of U.S. Special Operations forces in Europe.

U.S. officials say Ukrainian leaders have told them that American and other allied weaponry is making a difference on the battlefield. Ukrainian soldiers armed with shoulder-fired Javelin anti-tank missiles have several times in the past week attacked a mileslong convoy of Russian armor and supply trucks, helping stall the Russian ground advance as it bears down on Kyiv, Pentagon officials said. Some of the vehicles are being abandoned, officials said, because Russian troops fear sitting in the convoy when fuel-supply tanks are being targeted by the Ukrainians, setting off fireballs.

The convoy has also come under attack several times at different places along the column from another weapon supplied by a NATO member state. Armed Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones, which the Ukrainian military used for the first time in combat against Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine last October, are now hunting Russian tanks and other vehicles, U.S. officials said.

“All of us have been tremendously impressed by how effectively the Ukrainian armed forces have been using the equipment that we’ve provided them,” Laura Cooper, the Pentagon’s top Russia policy official, said. “Kremlin watchers have also been surprised by this, and how they have slowed the Russian advance and performed extremely well on the battlefield.”

Even the elements have sided with the Ukrainian military in the war’s early days. Bad weather in northern Ukraine has grounded some Russian attack planes and helicopters, a senior Pentagon official said. Many

Russian vehicles that have driven off the main roads to avoid the stalled convoy have gotten stuck in the mud, making them more vulnerable to attack, officials said.

But the U.S. intelligence also has its limits. Mr. Biden's ground rules forbid flying surveillance aircraft over Ukraine, so they have to peer in over the border, much as surveillance is often conducted over North Korea. There is reliance on new, small satellites — providing images similar to those that commercial firms like Maxar and Planet Labs are providing.

A War in Cyberspace That Has Barely Begun

One of the odd features of the conflict so far is that it runs the gamut of old and modern warfare. The trenches dug by Ukrainian soldiers in the south and east look like scenes from 1914. The Russian tanks rolling through the cities evoke Budapest in 1956. But the battle of the present day that most strategists expected to mark the opening days of the war — over computer networks and the power grids and communications systems they control — has barely begun.

American officials say that is partly because of extensive work done to harden Ukraine's networks after Russian attacks on its electric grid in 2015 and 2016. But experts say that cannot explain it all. Perhaps the Russians did not try very hard at the outset, or are holding their assets in reserve. Perhaps an American-led counteroffensive — part of what Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, the head of Cyber Command and the National Security Agency, calls a doctrine of “persistent engagement” in global networks — explains at least some of the absence.

Government officials are understandably tight-lipped, saying the cyberoperations underway, which have been moved in recent days from an operations center in Kyiv to one outside the country, are some of the most classified elements of the conflict. But it is clear that the cybermission teams have tracked some familiar targets, including the activities of the G.R.U., Russia's military intelligence operations, to try to neutralize their activity. Microsoft has helped, turning out patches in hours to kill off malware it detects in unclassified systems.

All of this is new territory when it comes to the question of whether the United States is a “co-combatant.” By the American interpretation of the laws of cyberconflict, the United States can temporarily interrupt Russian capability without conducting an act of war; permanent disablement is more problematic. But as experts acknowledge, when a Russian system goes down, the Russian units don't know whether it is temporary or permanent, or even whether the United States is responsible.

Similarly, sharing intelligence is perilous. American officials are convinced that Ukraine's military and intelligence agencies are populated with Russian spies, so they are being careful not to distribute raw intelligence that would reveal sources. And they say they are not passing on specific intelligence that would tell Ukrainian forces how to go after specific targets. The concern is that doing so would give Russia an excuse to say it is fighting the United States or NATO, not Ukraine.

The Lobbyists Fight, Too

Ukraine has been receiving lobbying, public relations and legal assistance free of charge — and it is paying off. Mr. Zelensky held a Zoom call with members of Congress on Saturday, pushing for tougher sanctions on Russia and urging specific types of arms and other support.

An ad hoc team includes Andrew Mac, an American lawyer who has been volunteering as a lobbyist and nonstaff adviser to Mr. Zelensky since late 2019, and Daniel Vajdich, a lobbyist who had been paid by the Ukrainian energy industry and a civil society nonprofit group, but is now working for free. But American lobbyists are a sensitive topic in Ukraine, after Paul Manafort, later President Trump's campaign chairman, worked for a pro-Russian president who was ousted in 2014, and after Mr. Trump tried to make military aid to Kyiv dependent on its willingness to help find dirt on then-candidate Biden and his son, Hunter.

	<p>Mr. Vajdich said he hoped his clients would redirect any funds they would have paid his firm to military defenses and humanitarian aid for Ukrainians forced from their homes by the fighting, drawing a comparison to early Nazi military aggression.</p> <p>“Knowing what we know today, if we were living and operating in 1937 to ’39, would we have asked the Czechoslovaks for compensation to lobby against Neville Chamberlain and his policies?” he asked, referring to the British prime minister who ceded part of Czechoslovakia to Nazi Germany in the Munich Agreement of 1938.</p> <p>“No,” he said, “certainly not.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 UN: 1.5M flee Ukraine; cease fire fails
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/6/un-more-15-million-refugees-have-fled-ukraine-neig/
GIST	<p>More than 1.5 million refugees from Ukraine have fled into neighboring countries, the United Nations said Sunday, as Russia’s military invasion pushed violently through its 11th day and attempts to establish humanitarian cease-fires failed around several besieged Ukrainian cities.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials said attempts to evacuate civilians from the southern port city of Mariupol were failing because of continued Russian shelling. Russia’s advance continued in other parts of Ukraine, including around the capital city of Kyiv.</p> <p>Talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations last week resulted in an agreement to create tentative cessations of fighting along “green” humanitarian corridors to facilitate civilian evacuations.</p> <p>Ukrainian Interior Ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko said Sunday that the Russian side was not honoring the agreement.</p> <p>“There can be no ‘green corridors’ because only the sick brain of the Russians decides when to start shooting and at whom,” Mr. Gerashchenko wrote on the Telegram social media platform, according to The Associated Press.</p> <p>The news agency reported that tentative cease-fires in Mariupol and nearby Volnovakha had failed. Civilians in those and other cities in southern, central and eastern Ukraine remained trapped under steady shelling and aerial bombardments by Russian forces, though more than 1 million had made it to safety.</p> <p>“More than 1.5 million refugees from Ukraine have crossed into neighbouring countries in 10 days — the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II,” U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said on his official Twitter account.</p> <p>Others warned that Russian forces were deliberately targeting populated areas of Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin has denied the claim.</p> <p>The British Defense Ministry circulated an intelligence update Sunday that said the scale and strength of Ukrainian resistance to the invasion “continues to surprise” Russia, which has “responded by targeting populated areas in multiple locations, including Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Mariupol.”</p> <p>“This is likely to represent an effort to break Ukrainian morale. Russia has previously used similar tactics in Chechnya in 1999 and Syria in 2016, employing both air and ground-based munitions,” the British Defense Ministry statement said, although it added that Ukrainian forces were succeeding in attacks that slowed the Russian advance.</p> <p>“Russian supply lines reportedly continue to be targeted, slowing the rate of advance of their ground forces,” it said. “There is a realistic possibility that Russia is now attempting to conceal fuel trucks as regular support trucks to minimize losses.”</p>

Throughout the weekend, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for Ukrainians to fight the Russian invasion. He also pleaded with the United States and other NATO member countries to put more pressure on Moscow to halt its invasion and to provide military assistance to Ukraine.

As Russian forces surrounded several Ukrainian cities and maintained a convoy outside Kyiv, Mr. Zelenskyy appeared on television Saturday night wearing what has become a habitual military green T-shirt and rallied his people to remain defiant.

“Ukrainians in all of our cities that the enemy has entered — go on the offensive,” the Ukrainian president said. “You should take to the streets. You should fight. ... It is necessary to go out and drive this evil out of our cities, from our land.”

Mr. Zelenskyy separately reiterated a request for foreign protectors to impose a no-fly zone over the country. Mr. Putin warned Saturday that Moscow would consider a third-party declaration to close Ukrainian airspace to become a party to the war.

“The world is strong enough to close our skies,” Mr. Zelenskyy said Sunday in a video address.

The West, fearing a direct military clash with Russia, has rebuffed Mr. Zelenskyy’s pleas.

Sen. Marco Rubio, Florida Republican and vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, cautioned Sunday about the risk of escalation associated with a no-fly zone.

“I think people need to understand what a no-fly zone means ... it’s not some rule you pass that everybody has to oblige by,” he told ABC’s “This Week” program. “It’s the willingness to shoot down the aircraft of the Russian Federation, which is basically the beginning of World War III.”

President Biden called Mr. Zelenskyy on Sunday to discuss the U.S. strategy, which has involved harsh economic sanctions on Russia and rapid U.S. assistance to Ukraine.

The White House said the conversation also covered talks between Russia and Ukraine, but it did not give details.

A third round of talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations is slated for Monday.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken spent the weekend visiting NATO member nations in Eastern Europe, which have taken in more than 1 million refugees over the past 11 days.

Mr. Blinken crossed briefly over the Polish border into western Ukraine on Saturday in a show of solidarity with Kyiv. He was in Moldova on Sunday to pledge support for that Western-leaning former Soviet republic, which is coping with an influx of refugees and warily watching Russia’s moves in Ukraine.

Like Ukraine for the past several years, Moldova has been dealing with a breakaway Russian separatist region.

The U.S. and allies last week imposed a widening slate of economic sanctions on Russian companies and the oligarchs surrounding Mr. Putin. The German government halted the certification of Nord Stream 2, a pipeline recently built to carry Russian natural gas to Germany.

The Western sanctions have crippled the Russian economy and sent the value of the ruble tumbling. Russia’s financial system sustained yet another blow over the weekend as Mastercard, Visa and American Express announced they were suspending operations in the country.

Mr. Blinken told the CBS program “Face the Nation” in an interview from Moldova on Sunday that the U.S., the European Union and the Group of Seven leading industrial countries were working together to “increase pressure on Russia through additional sanctions, all of which are very actively under discussion and will be implemented in the coming days.”

Mr. Putin on Saturday likened the West’s sanctions to “declaring war” on Russia.

He continued to pin the blame for Russia’s invasion squarely on the Ukrainian leaders and condemned their resistance. “If they continue to do what they are doing, they are calling into question the future of Ukrainian statehood,” he said. “If this happens, it will be entirely on their conscience.”

Reports surfaced throughout the weekend of indiscriminate Russian shelling of populated areas that killed civilians, including women and children.

The World Health Organization on Sunday condemned attacks on health care workers in Ukraine that killed six people and injured 11 others. Attacking health care workers is a violation of international humanitarian law, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Twitter.

Rep. Michael T. McCaul of Texas, the lead Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said during a visit to Poland with other House members that the humanitarian crisis is likely to grow more severe in the coming days.

“It’s very emotional. A lot of the members were actually in tears. To see these mothers and their children,” Mr. McCaul said. “I have to say, historically, I’m reminded of when Hitler invaded Poland. ... This seems eerily similar, and watching these refugees coming out of Ukraine, over 100,000 yesterday, over 100,000 today, 1.5 million over the last week and a half, and they say it’s only going to get worse as the noose is tightening around the neck of Ukraine.”

From Poland, Mr. McCaul told CNN’s “State of the Union” program that Russia’s invasion unified a NATO alliance that was struggling to find momentum and focus in recent years.

“I think if Putin has done anything, he’s taken a NATO that was on life support and really unified it against him,” Mr. McCaul said. Mr. Putin “is trying to put the noose around the neck of Ukraine, but I think the noose is going around his neck. He sees the world is against him; this is his greatest fear.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 OR ban homebuyer ‘love letters’ blocked
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/federal-judge-blocks-oregons-first-in-nation-ban-on-homebuyer-love-letters/
GIST	<p>A federal judge has issued a preliminary injunction blocking Oregon’s first-in-the-nation ban on so-called real estate ‘love letters,’ personal notes from prospective homebuyers to home sellers, saying it violates the First Amendment by restricting free speech too broadly.</p> <p>The conservative Pacific Legal Foundation had filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court after the Oregon Legislature last year attempted to limit housing discrimination by prohibiting buyers from sending letters to sellers to try to sweeten their offers on houses for sale.</p> <p>Those letters, often written to appeal to a seller to accept a potentially less-competitive offer, were outlawed as of Jan. 1 by lawmakers seeking to ensure that sellers couldn’t make decisions based on race, national origin, marital or family status, sex, sexual orientation or other protected class.</p> <p>A Pacific Legal Foundation attorney, Daniel Ortner, described the injunction as a “major victory for free speech and economic opportunity.”</p>

	<p>The ruling “preserves the opportunity of home-buyers to speak freely to sellers and make the case why their purchase offers should win out,” Ortner said in a statement. “Love letters communicate information that helps sellers select the best offer. The state cannot ban important speech because someone might misuse it.”</p> <p>Gov. Kate Brown signed House Bill 2550, sponsored by state Rep. Mark Meek, D-Clackamas, last June. It had unanimously passed the House of Representatives and passed the state senate on a mostly party-line vote.</p> <p>The lawsuit, filed on behalf of Total Real Estate Group, a Bend company of 20 agents, said lawmakers provided no proof that such discrimination was taking place and that state and federal laws already prohibit housing discrimination.</p> <p>In his March 3 preliminary injunction, U.S. District Judge Marco Hernández said Oregon’s goal was laudable, given its “long and abhorrent history of racial discrimination in property ownership and housing” that for decades explicitly blocked people of color from owning property. But House Bill 2550 was overly inclusive, the judge said, banning significant amounts of innocuous speech in love letters beyond references to a buyer’s personal characteristics.</p> <p>Hernández said the state “could have addressed the problem of housing discrimination without infringing on protected speech to such a degree.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/06 WA highest record average for gas: \$4.40
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/price-gas-hits-highest-recorded-average-washington-aaa-reports/6BO54OWLT5BL7FQUM56CVCQJ4U/
GIST	<p>On Sunday, drivers in the Evergreen State were dishing out more green than ever before, according to AAA.</p> <p>The agency reported on Sunday that the average price for a gallon of gas in Washington reached \$4.407, marking the highest recorded average on record.</p> <p>The national average for a gallon of gasoline topped \$4 for the first time in 14 years on Sunday, and prices could go even higher, officials said. Gas prices nationwide are rising at the fastest rate since Hurricane Katrina in 2005.</p> <p>Ohna West, a mother of three, paid \$5.37 per gallon at a gas station in West Seattle.</p> <p>“It makes us have to make a choice. It’s either get dinner for the week or get gas,” West said. “At this point, you can’t do both. I know a lot of moms are out there having to choose. A lot of kids are now walking to school. And if gas continues rising, I’ll be on a bike.”</p> <p>Gas prices have been on the rise in the past year, but Russia’s invasion of Ukraine caused prices to skyrocket. While sanctions have not included bans on Russian oil, companies are worried enough to stay away.</p> <p>“How do you know that the oil you are loading has not been tainted by ownership from someone who has been sanctioned? You know how you solve that problem? You don’t buy it,” Andy Lipow, president of consulting firm Lipow Oil Associates, said to CNN Business. “The sanctions have led to a de facto ban on Russian oil.”</p> <p>It’s still unclear what’s ahead for drivers, according to travel experts.</p> <p>“Anytime we have this type of geopolitical tension, the oil markets ... they don’t respond well to this type of chaos,” Doug Shupe, a spokesperson for AAA Southern California, told our CBS affiliate in Los</p>

	<p>Angeles. “The reality is we don’t know how high these prices are going to go or when we’re going to see relief at the pumps.”</p>
Return to Top	
HEADLINE	03/06 US: Russia recruits Syria fighters
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-recruiting-syrians-for-urban-combat-in-ukraine-u-s-officials-say-11646606234?mod=e2tw
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—Moscow is recruiting Syrians skilled in urban combat to fight in Ukraine as Russia’s invasion is poised to expand deeper into cities, according to U.S. officials.</p> <p>An American assessment indicates that Russia, which has been operating inside Syria since 2015, has in recent days been recruiting fighters from there, hoping their expertise in urban combat can help take Kyiv and deal a devastating blow to the Ukraine government, according to four American officials. The move points to a potential escalation of fighting in Ukraine, experts said.</p> <p>It is unclear how many fighters have been identified, but some are already in Russia preparing to enter the conflict, according to one official.</p> <p>Officials declined to elaborate on what else is known about the deployment of Syrian fighters to Ukraine, the status or precise scale of the effort.</p> <p>According to a publication based in Deir Ezzor, Syria, Russia has offered volunteers from the country between \$200 and \$300 “to go to Ukraine and operate as guards” for six months at a time.</p> <p>Chechen forces have also been deployed to Ukraine, according to a Reuters report citing Ramzan Kadyrov, the leader of the Chechen Republic and an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin.</p> <p>Fighters are also pouring into the country to fight on the side of the Kyiv-based government. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said last week that 16,000 foreigners have volunteered to fight for Ukraine, part of what he described as an “international legion.”</p> <p>With volunteers from other countries flowing into Ukraine, the conflict there could become a new center of gravity for foreign fighters, said Jennifer Cafarella, national security fellow at the Institute for the Study of War in Washington, D.C.</p> <p>“The Russia deployment of foreign fighters from Syria into Ukraine internationalizes the Ukraine war, and therefore could link the war in Ukraine to broader cross regional dynamics, particularly in the Middle East,” she said.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of Russian troops are inside Ukraine and mortar, missile and other attacks are occurring daily in the northern, eastern and southern regions of the country. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have fled the cities, which were home to roughly two-thirds of the population before the invasion began Feb. 24.</p> <p>Ukraine remains in the hands of Mr. Zelensky’s government, and the largest cities, Kyiv, the capital, and Kharkiv in the east, remain under government control. Russia has taken over the port city of Kherson, and Ukraine’s other cities now face an assault from Russia.</p> <p>Syrian fighters have spent nearly a decade fighting urban warfare, while Russia’s largely conscripted force lacks this skill set. Ms. Cafarella said Syrian forces deployed to Ukraine could also be asked to work a support role, based on how they worked in Syria with the Wagner Group, a mercenary force that some see as a proxy for the Russian government.</p> <p>Charles Lister, a Syria expert at the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C., questioned how useful the recruits from the Middle East could be in Ukraine. Mr. Lister said there are some Russian-trained Syrians</p>

	<p>who were involved in hunting members of Islamic State who might be in Ukraine, but generally Moscow didn't consider Syrian fighters to be good at urban warfare.</p> <p>"Bringing Syrians into Ukraine is like bringing Martians to fight on the moon," Mr. Lister said. "They don't speak the language, the environment is totally different."</p> <p>Russia has been a key backer of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad since it entered that conflict, largely through airstrikes, as well as Russian armed forces. The Wagner Group, which arrived in Syria shortly after Russia entered the conflict on behalf of the Assad regime, has conducted support operations such as seizing oil and gas fields and securing other government infrastructure, such as airports.</p> <p>Russia, which positioned nearly 200,000 troops along the Ukrainian border in the weeks leading up to the invasion, said Wednesday 498 of its troops have been killed and another 1,597 have been injured, a rare public admission of battlefield losses. Others have put the figures much higher, including the Ukrainian armed forces' general staff, which, according to a Reuters report, said the estimate for Russian troop deaths was closer to 11,000.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 Ukraine: 20,000 foreign volunteers to fight
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/world/globaltalk/ukraine-russia-foreignvolunteers/2022/03/06/id/1059918/
GIST	<p>Almost 20,000 non-Ukrainian volunteers have agreed to fight alongside the country's armed forces against Russia, Ukrainian officials said Sunday, The Washington Post reported.</p> <p>Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said at a news conference that "experienced veterans and volunteers from 52 countries of the world come to us. This is their desire," according to local media.</p> <p>Kuleba added that most of the volunteers were from numerous European nations, AFP reported.</p> <p>"Many people in the world hated Russia and what it was doing in recent years, but no one dared to openly oppose and fight them," the Ukrainian foreign minister said. "So when people saw that Ukrainians are fighting, that Ukrainians are not giving up, many felt motivated to join the fight" against the Russian invaders.</p> <p>The wave of volunteers signing up to fight followed an appeal from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last week calling on "citizens of the world" to come help defend against the Russian invaders according to the New York Post.</p> <p>Zelensky also lifted visa requirements for foreign fighters who were willing to volunteer.</p> <p>Volunteers were asked to apply at Ukrainian embassies in their respective nations if they wanted to join the fight against Russia, AFP reported.</p> <p>Ukraine's Defense Ministry also posted on Facebook an urgent call for volunteers, stating that "this is [the] time to act" and "do not lose your chance to be part of the bravest Armed Forces!"</p> <p>The Facebook posting also provided the steps a foreigner needed to take in order to volunteer to fight, emphasizing that Ukraine was appealing to those who "want [to] actively participate in fighting for European freedom and democracy" and said the country could use those who "have combat experience or want to gain it standing with brave Ukrainian defenders."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 Truck convoy laps around Washington
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/us/peoplesconvoy-washington-laps-biden/2022/03/06/id/1059864/
GIST	Hundreds of trucks, recreational vehicles and cars circled the outskirts of Washington on Sunday, aiming to slow traffic around the capital as part of a protest against pandemic restrictions.

The so-called "People's Convoy," which originated in California and has drawn participants from around the country, is calling for an end to all pandemic-related restrictions. It was inspired by demonstrations last month that paralyzed Ottawa, Canada's capital city.

Leaders of the convoy said that on Monday they will again slowly drive the Beltway, a 64-mile highway that encircles the city, though details of when the action would take place were not known.

Hundreds of vehicles gathered on Friday and Saturday at the Hagerstown Speedway, a racetrack in Maryland about 80 miles (129 km) northwest of downtown Washington.

On Sunday morning, many left in convoy to drive two slow laps on the Beltway. They honked their horns as they set off, while onlookers waved American flags, according to a Reuters witness.

The convoy, more than 2 miles long, slowed traffic at points along the Beltway by late Sunday morning, but did not bring it to a standstill. It returned to the Hagerstown Speedway in the afternoon, according to messages on the convoy's Telegram channel.

The convoy's protest against vaccine requirements and other pandemic restrictions has been undercut in recent weeks as major U.S. cities have rolled back mask mandates and other measures against COVID-19 with infections and hospitalizations declining dramatically.

President Joe Biden, a Democrat, signaled in his State of the Union speech on Tuesday that the country was entering a new, phase of the pandemic without business lockdowns, school closures or other daily disruptions.

At the racetrack on Friday night, one participant who described himself as the lead trucker told a cheering crowd he would drive his truck into the heart of the American capital.

"D.C., the government, whomever, can claim that they have all this opposition for us waiting in D.C.," the man said. "But that flag on the back of my truck will go down to Constitution Avenue between the White House and the Washington Monument."

U.S. federal law enforcement agencies have been coordinating with state and local authorities for weeks in preparation for the possible arrival of the convoy, according to one U.S. official who requested anonymity to discuss internal operations.

A Feb. 26 U.S. Department of Homeland Security bulletin to law enforcement reviewed by Reuters said trucker convoys could hinder emergency responders depending on the size of the protest.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Security breach Joint Base Andrews
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/07/us/joint-base-andrews-lockdown.html
GIST	<p>The military base in Maryland that the president and the vice president use to travel to and from Washington was put on lockdown on Sunday night when two people, at least one of whom was armed, bypassed a security checkpoint at about the time that Vice President Kamala Harris and four Cabinet members landed there, military officials said.</p> <p>The two people drove through the checkpoint at the main gate and “failed to adhere to commands of security personnel,” Joint Base Andrews in Prince George’s County, Md., said in a statement on Sunday night.</p> <p>The authorities at the base, in the Maryland suburbs of Washington, stopped the intruders’ vehicle with “barriers,” but they fled, the statement said. One of them was apprehended, but the other was still being sought late Sunday night.</p>

“We can confirm that the individual who was apprehended had a weapon, but no shots have been fired,” the base said in the statement. The authorities did not identify the person who was apprehended.

Ms. Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff, were safely flown off the base on Marine Two, the vice-presidential helicopter, although it was unclear if they left before or after they heard about the lockdown, according to reporters who had just traveled to Selma, Ala., with Ms. Harris.

Police officers searched the grounds and the vehicles at the scene, including a shuttle containing the reporters.

Traffic leaving the base was halted while police enforced the lockdown, creating a long line stretching back from a main gate. Police vehicles and helicopters circled the base.

Ms. Harris, Mr. Emhoff and the four Cabinet members — Education Secretary Miguel Cardona; Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg; Housing Secretary Marcia Fudge; and Michael S. Regan, the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency — had just flown into the base on Air Force Two, according to the reporters who had traveled with them.

The vice president had traveled in the morning to commemorate the 57th anniversary of the civil rights march on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma.

In February 2021, an intruder at the base boarded a plane typically used by senior government officials and military leaders. The breach prompted the authorities to order a review of security at Air Force bases worldwide.

A similar lockdown at the base happened in 2016 after there were reports of an active gunman, grounding then-Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr.’s flight to Ohio. It came the same day the base had planned to hold an active shooter response drill. The reports of a gunman turned out to be false.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/07 China lashes US over Quad nations, NKorea
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/china-lashes-washington-quad-north-korea-83292438
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- China’s top diplomat on Monday accused Washington of trying to create an Asian version of the U.S.-European NATO military alliance and said it is up to the Biden administration to improve relations with North Korea.</p> <p>U.S. policy toward East Asia and the Indian Ocean and efforts to strengthen military ties with Japan, Australia and India are a “disaster that disrupts regional peace and stability,” Wang Yi said at a news conference.</p> <p>The comments reflected the ruling Communist Party's ambitions to be Asia's undisputed power and its frustration with resistance from neighbors to its territorial claims in the South China Sea and the Himalayas.</p> <p>They also reflect Beijing's stance toward Russia's invasion of Ukraine. China has sought to distance itself from the war by calling for dialogue and respect for national sovereignty. It also has said Washington is to blame for the conflict for failing to take Russia's security concerns into consideration.</p> <p>“The United States is playing geopolitical games under the pretext of promoting regional cooperation,” Wang said. He said this “runs counter” to regional desires for cooperation and “is doomed to have no future.”</p> <p>Wang complained Washington is organizing U.S. allies to “suppress China.”</p>

Beijing is irritated by growing military ties among the Quad nations of the United States, Japan, Australia and India. China criticized a U.S. decision last year to supply technology for Australia to field its first nuclear-powered submarines.

“The real purpose of the ‘Indo-Pacific strategy’ is to create an Indo-Pacific version of NATO,” he said. The Western alliance’s expansion was cited by Russian President Vladimir Putin as one reason behind his invasion of Ukraine.

Beijing's assertive foreign policy and claims to disputed territories in the South China Sea and the Himalayas have antagonized Japan, India and other neighbors. China

Wang called on the Biden administration to revive the spirit of the 1970s agreements that opened U.S. relations with the communist Beijing government.

“The United States still spares no effort to carry out intense competition with China, constantly attacking and provoking trouble on issues regarding China’s core interests,” Wang said.

Washington should “return to the right track of rationality and pragmatism,” he said.

Wang called on Washington take initiative to improve relations with North Korea. He accused the Biden administration of failing to respond to “positive measures” by leader Kim Jong Un’s government “aimed at promoting dialogue.”

“Where to go next depends largely on what the American side does: will it really take concrete actions to solve the problem, or will it continue to use the (Korean) peninsula issue as a strategic bargaining chip?” Wang said.

Wang called on Washington to take steps to address the North’s “legitimate security concerns” and establish trust but gave no details.

“China is willing to continue to play a constructive role and make efforts to this end,” he said.

Turning to the disputed South China Sea, Wang complained outsiders were interfering with efforts to develop a “code of conduct” and said Beijing and Southeast Asian governments should be left alone to negotiate.

The United States and other governments have sent warships through sections of the sea claimed by Beijing to assert the right of vessels from all countries to use the waters.

Outsiders “do not want the South China Sea to be calm, because this will make them lose the pretext to intervene for personal gain,” Wang said. “External interference cannot stop the pace of regional cooperation.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Covid death toll nears 6M into 3 rd year
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Lifestyle/wireStory/death-toll-nears-million-pandemic-enters-3rd-year-83281825
GIST	<p>BANGKOK -- The official global death toll from COVID-19 is on the verge of eclipsing 6 million — underscoring that the pandemic, now entering its third year, is far from over.</p> <p>The milestone is the latest tragic reminder of the unrelenting nature of the pandemic even as people are shedding masks, travel is resuming and businesses are reopening around the globe. The death toll, compiled by Johns Hopkins University, stood at 5,999,158 as of Monday midday.</p> <p>Remote Pacific islands, whose isolation had protected them for more than two years, are just now grappling with their first outbreaks and deaths, fueled by the highly contagious omicron variant.</p>

Hong Kong, which is seeing deaths soar, is testing its entire population of 7.5 million three times this month as it clings to mainland China's "zero-COVID" strategy.

As death rates remain high in Poland, Hungary, Romania and other Eastern European countries, the region has seen more than 1 million refugees arrive from war-torn Ukraine, a country with poor vaccination coverage and high rates of cases and deaths.

And despite its wealth and vaccine availability, the United States is nearing 1 million reported deaths on its own.

Death rates worldwide are still highest among people unvaccinated against the virus, said Tikki Pang, a visiting professor at the National University of Singapore's medical school and co-Chair of the Asia Pacific Immunization Coalition.

"This is a disease of the unvaccinated — look what is happening in Hong Kong right now, the health system is being overwhelmed," said Pang, the former director of research policy and cooperation with the World Health Organization. "The large majority of the deaths and the severe cases are in the unvaccinated, vulnerable segment of the population."

It took the world seven months to record its first million deaths from the virus after the pandemic began in early 2020. Four months later another million people had died, and 1 million have died every three months since, until the death toll hit 5 million at the end of October. Now it has reached 6 million — more than the populations of Berlin and Brussels combined, or the entire state of Maryland.

But despite the enormity of the figure, the world undoubtedly hit its 6 millionth death some time ago. Poor record-keeping and testing in many parts of the world has led to an undercount in coronavirus deaths, in addition to excess deaths related to the pandemic but not from actual COVID-19 infections, like people who died from preventable causes but could not receive treatment because hospitals were full.

Edouard Mathieu, head of data for the Our World in Data portal, said that — when countries' excess mortality figures are studied — as many as nearly four times the reported death toll have likely died because of the pandemic.

An analysis of excess deaths by a team at The Economist estimates that the number of COVID-19 deaths is between 14 million and 23.5 million.

"Confirmed deaths represent a fraction of the true number of deaths due to COVID, mostly because of limited testing, and challenges in the attribution of the cause of death," Mathieu told The Associated Press. "In some, mostly rich, countries that fraction is high and the official tally can be considered to be fairly accurate, but in others it is highly underestimated."

The United States has the biggest official death toll in the world, but the numbers have been trending downward over the last month.

Lonnie Bailey lost his 17-year-old nephew, Carlos Nunez Jr., who contracted COVID-19 last April — the same month Kentucky opened his age group to vaccinations. The Louisville resident said the family is still suffering, including Carlos' younger sibling, who had to be hospitalized himself and still has lingering symptoms. The aggressive reopening of the country has been jarring for them to witness.

"For us it is hard to let our guard down; it's going to take a while for us to adjust," Bailey said.

The world has seen more than 445 million confirmed COVID-19 cases, and new weekly cases have been declining recently in all regions except for the Western Pacific, which includes China, Japan and South Korea, among others, the World Health Organization reported this week.

Although the overall figures in the Pacific islands seeing their first outbreaks are small compared to larger countries, they are significant among their tiny populations and threaten to overwhelm fragile health care systems.

“Given what we know about COVID ... it’s likely to hit them for the next year or so at least,” said Katie Greenwood, head of the Red Cross Pacific delegation.

Tonga reported its first outbreak after the virus arrived with international aid vessels following the Jan. 15 eruption of a massive volcano, followed by a tsunami. It now has several hundred cases, but — with 66% of its population fully vaccinated — it has so far reported people suffering mostly mild symptoms and no deaths.

The Solomon Islands saw the first outbreak in January and now has thousands of cases and more than 100 deaths. The actual death toll is likely much higher, with the capital’s hospital overwhelmed and many dying at home, Greenwood said.

Only 12% of Solomon Islanders are fully vaccinated, though the outbreak has provided new impetus to the country’s vaccination campaign and 29% now have at least one shot.

Global vaccine disparity continues, with only 6.95% of people in low-income countries fully vaccinated, compared to more than 73% in high-income nations, according to Our World in Data.

In a good sign, at the end of last month Africa surpassed Europe in the number of doses administered daily, but only about 12.5% of its population has received two shots.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is still pressing for more vaccines, though it has been a challenge. Some shipments arrive with little warning for countries’ health systems and others near the expiration date — forcing doses to be destroyed.

Eastern Europe has been particularly hard hit by the omicron variant, and with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a new risk has emerged as hundreds of thousands of people flee to places like Poland on crowded trains. Health officials there have been offering free vaccinations to all refugees, but have not been making them test upon arrival or quarantine.

“This is really tragic because great stress has a very negative effect on natural immunity and increases the risk of infections,” said Anna Boron-Kaczmarek, a Polish infectious disease specialist. “They are in very high stress, being afraid for their lives, the lives of their children, their family members.”

Mexico has reported 300,000 deaths, but with little testing, a government analysis of death certificates puts the real number closer to 500,000. Still, four weeks of falling infection rates have left health officials optimistic.

In India, where the world was shocked by images of open-air pyres of bodies burned as crematoria were overwhelmed, the scars are fading as the number of new cases and deaths has slowed.

India has recorded more than 500,000 deaths, but experts believe its true toll is in the millions, primarily from the delta variant. Migrants from India’s vast hinterland are now returning to its megacities in search of jobs, and the streets are packed with traffic. Shopping malls have customers, albeit still masked, while schools and universities are welcoming students after a months-long gap.

In Britain, infections have fallen since an omicron-driven surge in December, but remain high. England has now lifted all restrictions, including mask mandates and the requirement that all who test positive isolate at home.

With about 250,000 reported deaths, the African continent’s smaller death toll is thought to stem from underreporting, as well as a generally younger and less mobile population.

“Africa is a big question mark for me, because it has been relatively spared from the worst so far, but it could just be a time bomb,” Pang said, noting its low vaccination rates.

In South Africa, Soweto resident Thoko Dube said she received news of the deaths of two family members on the same day in January 2021 — a month before the country received its first vaccines.

It has been difficult, but “the family is coping,” she said. “We have accepted it because it has been happening to other families.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 China Covid surge despite ‘zero tolerance’
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/china-surge-cases-tolerance-83291708
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- China is seeing a new surge in COVID-19 cases across the vast country, despite its draconian “zero tolerance” approach to dealing with outbreaks.</p> <p>The mainland on Monday reported 214 new cases of infection over the previous 24 hours, with the most, 69, in the southern province of Guangdong bordering on Hong Kong, which has been recording tens of thousands of cases per day.</p> <p>Another 54 cases were reported in the Jilin province, more than 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) to the north, and 46 in the eastern province Shandong.</p> <p>In his annual report to the national legislature Saturday, Premier Li Keqiang said China needs to “constantly refine epidemic containment” but gave no indication Beijing might ease the highly touted “zero tolerance” strategy.</p> <p>Li called for accelerating vaccine development and “strengthening epidemic controls” in cities where travelers and goods arrive from abroad.</p> <p>“Zero tolerance” requires quarantines and lockdowns on entire communities and sometimes even cities when as few as a handful of cases have been detected. Chinese officials credit the approach — along with a vaccination rate of more than 80% — with helping prevent a major nationwide outbreak, but critics say it is taking a major toll on the economy and preventing the population from building up natural immunity.</p> <p>No new cases were reported in Beijing and the city was largely back to normal, although masks continue to be worn in public places indoors.</p> <p>One area that continues to feel the effects of tight COVID-19 control is the religious sector. Three of Beijing's most famous Catholic churches, Buddhist temples and mosques stated Sunday they had been ordered closed in January with no date given on reopening.</p> <p>Even before the pandemic, such institutions were under heavy pressure from the Communist authorities to follow through on demands from leader Xi Jinping that all religious centers be purged of outside influence, including the physical appearance of places of worship.</p> <p>The latest daily case numbers mark some of the highest since the initial outbreak in the central city of Wuhan in late 2019 that is believed to have sparked the pandemic.</p> <p>They bring China's total to 111,195 with 4,636 deaths, according to the National Health Commission. At present, 3,837 people are receiving treatment for COVID-19, many of them infected with the omicron strain.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Biggest movement of people since WWII
----------	--

SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/refugees-fleeing-ukraine-now-represent-biggest-movement-of-people-in-europe-since-world-war-ii-11646493910
GIST	<p>RZESZOW, Poland—More than 1.45 million people have left Ukraine since Russia invaded the country nine days ago, the International Organization for Migration said on Saturday, sparking what the United Nations agency described as the fastest and largest displacement of people in Europe since World War II.</p> <p>Since Russia invaded Ukraine last week, large numbers of Ukrainians have fled, most heading west and toward eastern members of the European Union—Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia—that have pledged assistance.</p> <p>Around half of the refugees have crossed into Poland, whose border-control agency said on Saturday that 827,600 people had entered from Ukraine since Feb. 24, when the Russian invasion began. The first seven hours of Saturday saw 33,700 arrivals, more than the previous day, according to the agency.</p> <p>In the short time since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, more asylum seekers have crossed into the EU than in all of 2015, when some 1.3 million arrived from the Middle East and elsewhere in a wave of migration that tested the bloc’s solidarity and placed pressure on leaders including former German Chancellor Angela Merkel.</p> <p>European rail operators are allowing free travel to anyone carrying Ukrainian identification papers, and the EU agreed on Thursday to grant Ukrainian refugees temporary residence permits, removing the need for them to request asylum.</p> <p>Poland has been a staunch supporter of Ukrainian independence since before the invasion, with Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki pledging weapons and humanitarian supplies on visits to Kyiv as Russia built up troops around Ukraine.</p> <p>Since then, towns and cities along Poland’s eastern border and in parts of other countries that neighbor Ukraine have mobilized resources to help the influx of migrants, bringing blankets and warm clothing to school sports halls and opening logistics centers to process the new arrivals.</p> <p>In Germany, to accommodate arrivals from Ukraine, authorities have reopened refugee shelters that were used in 2015-16, at the height of the Syrian war.</p> <p>At the time, countries such as Poland and Hungary drew ire from some European leaders by opposing migrant quotas from the EU and putting up fences and other restrictions aimed at keeping people out. Those countries are again at the border of another humanitarian crisis, and giving refuge to residents of a post-Soviet neighbor that has long voiced aspirations to become an EU member.</p> <p>“When Russia opens fire on Ukraine, Poles open up their border and their hearts for them,” Mr. Morawiecki wrote on Twitter on Friday.</p> <p>Hundreds of volunteers are working at Poland’s border with Ukraine to find shelter and warm clothing for refugees and arrange onward travel.</p> <p>At the train station in Przemyśl, a town near the border, Ukrainians can get free meals, cellphone sim cards and help with arranging free travel to other Polish cities.</p> <p>Many of the volunteers working in Przemyśl are hosting refugees at their homes while they arrange accommodation for them in larger cities such as Krakow and Warsaw.</p> <p>“This situation poses a very big challenge, a kind of an exam I hope that we will all pass somehow,” said Anna Leskiw, a Polish language teacher at the Ukrainian School in Przemyśl. Ms. Leskiw has been coming to the train station daily as a volunteer, often joined by students.</p>

On one day, “3,000 people left one train, mainly women with children,” Ms. Leskiw said. “A horrible view—they were exhausted, were crying. My heart didn’t handle that.”

Poland is already home to between one million and two million Ukrainians, many of whom have settled in the country since conflict erupted in eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed separatists and Kyiv in 2014. Many of the new arrivals are connecting with family or friends already in Poland.

Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau, meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Saturday, said Warsaw’s priority is “organizing effective aid to hundreds of thousands and soon to be millions of refugees.”

A few miles from the border, Mr. Blinken visited the Korczowa refugee processing center, a converted shopping mall brimming with Ukrainians—mostly women and children—along with coats and piles of food and water bottles.

One mother said her house in Kharkiv was destroyed by a shell while she and her daughters, ages 6 and 1, were sheltering in a basement. “They are children, they don’t understand,” she said.

Jasmine Ahmadi, 16, said she traveled from Kyiv to Poland with her family, six dogs and seven cats. “I was scared I would die,” she said.

In Germany, around 20,000 refugees have been registered since the start of the war, according to the government, a number that continues to grow with thousands of daily arrivals at the central train station in Berlin. More than 13,000 people fleeing the war arrived by train in Berlin on Friday evening, Germany’s rail operator Deutsche Bahn said.

“We will of course take in those who come to Germany,” Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said last week.

Germans have flocked to Berlin Central Station to offer food and accommodation to refugees pouring in from Poland.

“My dad and my brother stayed behind to help defend our home,” said a woman who arrived Tuesday with three children and her elderly mother. “We cry for them, not for us,” she said while waiting for a train to Italy, hoping to join relatives who live there.

People from across Europe have come to the border to help the refugees. Near the Polish-Ukrainian border crossing at Medyka, Dutch, German and Austrian citizens have arrived to help transport Ukrainians or offer them a temporary roof over their heads.

Danny Rijnenberg, a 29-year-old Dutchman who works for an insulation company, traveled this week from his home in the Netherlands to offer transportation and accommodations to any Ukrainians who want to temporarily stay at his home.

“This is my human obligation,” said Mr. Rijnenberg, as he stood in the arrivals hall of Przemysl train station holding a placard reading “Holland.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 National average gas price tops \$4/gal.
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2022/03/06/national-average-for-a-gallon-of-gas-tops-4-the-highest-price-at-the-pump-since-2008.html
GIST	Gasoline prices surged to the highest level since 2008 on Sunday, as crude oil supply fears stemming from Russia’s war on Ukraine increase the impact on consumers at the pump.

The national average for a gallon of gas hit \$4.009 on Sunday, according to AAA, which is the highest since July 2008, not adjusted for inflation. Prices have been rising at a fast clip. Consumers are paying 40 cents more than a week ago, and 57 cents more than a month ago.

In some places, consumers are paying much more. California's average is now \$5.288 per gallon.

The jump in prices follows a surge in the price of oil amid Russia's war on Ukraine. The underlying cost of oil accounts for more than 50% of the cost of gas that consumers put in their cars, and U.S. oil is trading at levels not seen since 2008.

Russia is a key producer and exporter of oil and gas. While Western allies' sanctions have so far carved out room for Russia's energy trade to continue, the market is self-sanctioning — in other words buyers are avoiding Russian products. According to estimates from JPMorgan, 66% of Russian oil is struggling to find buyers. This is creating supply fears in what was an already tight market prior to Russia's invasion.

Andy Lipow, president of Lipow Oil Associates, said the next stop for the national average is \$4.50 a gallon as supply disruptions ripple across the energy complex.

"Oil buyers are reducing their purchases of refined products from Russia causing Russian refineries to shut down," he said. "Dockworkers are refusing to unload vessels carrying oil and gas. Insurance rates are skyrocketing causing vessel owners to cancel ship bookings loading in Russia and this is also impacting on the ability of Kazakhstan to sell their oil."

The jump in gas price is contributing to inflationary fears across the economy. The Biden administration has said for months that they are working to bring down prices at the pump, and in the fall tapped the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. With prices up sharply since, some are calling on the administration to pause the federal gas tax.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 War threatens world's 'breadbasket'
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-business-africa-lifestyle-middle-east-1b41faaa7ac0984d0673023b68d39a70
GIST	<p>BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — The Russian tanks and missiles besieging Ukraine also are threatening the food supply and livelihoods of people in Europe, Africa and Asia who rely on the vast, fertile farmlands of the Black Sea region — known as the “breadbasket of the world.”</p> <p>Ukrainian farmers have been forced to neglect their fields as millions flee, fight or try to stay alive. Ports are shut down that send wheat and other food staples worldwide to be made into bread, noodles and animal feed. And there are worries Russia, another agricultural powerhouse, could have its grain exports upended by Western sanctions.</p> <p>While there have not yet been global disruptions to wheat supplies, prices have surged 55% since a week before the invasion amid concerns about what could happen next. If the war is prolonged, countries that rely on affordable wheat exports from Ukraine could face shortages starting in July, International Grains Council director Arnaud Petit told The Associated Press.</p> <p>That could create food insecurity and throw more people into poverty in places like Egypt and Lebanon, where diets are dominated by government-subsidized bread. In Europe, officials are preparing for potential shortages of products from Ukraine and increased prices for livestock feed that could mean more expensive meat and dairy if farmers are forced to pass along costs to customers.</p> <p>Russia and Ukraine combine for nearly a third of the world's wheat and barley exports. Ukraine also is a major supplier of corn and the global leader in sunflower oil, used in food processing. The war could reduce food supplies just when prices are at their highest levels since 2011.</p>

[A prolonged conflict would have a big impact](#) some 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers) away in Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer. Millions rely on subsidized bread made from Ukrainian grains to survive, with about a third of people living in poverty.

"Wars mean shortages, and shortages mean (price) hikes," Ahmed Salah, a 47-year-old father of seven, said in Cairo. "Any hikes will be catastrophic not only for me, but for the majority of the people."

Anna Nagurney, a professor of supply chains, logistics and economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, said, "Wheat, corn, oils, barley, flour are extremely important to food security ... especially in the poorer parts of the globe."

With Ukrainian men being called on to fight, she said, "Who's going to be doing the harvesting? Who'd be doing the transportation?"

Egypt's state procurer of wheat, which normally buys heavily from Russia and Ukraine, had to cancel two orders in less than a week: one for overpricing, the other because a lack of companies offered to sell their supplies. Sharp spikes in the cost of wheat globally could severely affect Egypt's ability to keep bread prices at their current subsidized level.

"Bread is extremely heavily subsidized in Egypt, and successive governments have found that cuts to those subsidies are the one straw that should be kept off the camel's back at all costs," Mirette Mabrouk, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, wrote in a recent analysis.

War-ravaged Syria recently announced it would cut spending and ration staples. In nearby Lebanon, where a massive explosion at the Beirut port in 2020 destroyed the country's main grain silos, authorities are scrambling to make up for a predicted [wheat shortage](#), with Ukraine providing 60% of its supply. They are in talks with the U.S., India and Canada to find other sources for a country already in financial meltdown.

Even before the war threatened to affect wheat supplies in sub-Saharan Africa, people in Kenya were demanding #lowerfoodprices on social media as [inflation eroded their spending power](#). Now, they're bracing for worse.

African countries imported agricultural products worth \$4 billion from Russia in 2020, and about 90% was wheat, said Wandile Sihlobo, chief economist for the Agricultural Business Chamber of South Africa.

In Nigeria, flour millers believe a shortage of wheat supplies from Russia would affect the price of products like bread, a common food in Africa's most populous country.

"All of us need to look elsewhere" in the future, said Tope Ogun with Honeywell Flour Mills Plc, one of Nigeria's biggest flour milling companies. "We might not get what we need to, and there is likely going to be an increase in the price."

Nigeria has taken pains to reduce its reliance on Russian grains, with farmers moving to plant more wheat fields to try to meet 70% of the country's demand in five years, said Gambo Sale, national secretary of the Wheat Farmers Association of Nigeria.

"We have the land, we have the people, we have the money, we have whatever we can need in Nigeria" to grow wheat, he said. "All we need now is time."

The disruption can be felt as far away as Indonesia, where wheat is used to make instant noodles, bread, fried foods and snacks.

Ukraine was Indonesia's second-largest wheat supplier last year, providing 26% of wheat consumed. Rising prices for noodles, in turn, would hurt lower-income people, said Kasan Muhri, who heads the trade ministry's research division.

Ukraine and Russia also combine for 75% of global sunflower oil exports, accounting for 10% of all cooking oils, IHS Markit said.

Raad Hebsi, a wholesale retailer in Baghdad, said he and other Iraqis are bracing to pay more for their cooking oil.

“Once the items stored are sold, we will see an increase in prices of these items,” he said. “We will likely purchase alternatives from Turkey, and Turkey will no doubt take advantage of the situation in Ukraine and raise its prices.”

Farmers in the United States, the world’s leading corn exporter and a major wheat supplier, are watching to see if U.S. wheat exports spike. In the European Union, farmers are concerned about rising costs for livestock feed.

Ukraine supplies the EU with just under 60% of its corn and nearly half of a key component in the grains needed to feed livestock. Russia, which [provides the EU with 40% of its natural gas needs](#), is similarly a major supplier of fertilizer, wheat and other staples.

Spain is feeling the pinch both in sunflower oil, which supermarkets are rationing, and grains for the all-important breeding industry. Those imported grains go to feed some 55 million pigs.

Jaume Bernis, a 58-year-old breeder with 1,200 swine on his farm in northeast Spain, fears the war will further increase the pain his business is facing because of [climate change and drought](#).

Since October, Spanish pork products have been taking a loss from high costs, Bernis said. Those costs are driven by China stockpiling feed for its pigs as it claws its way out of a devastating outbreak of African swine fever.

In the first two days of Russia’s assault on Ukraine, the price of grain for animal feed jumped 10% on the open market in Spain.

“We are facing a moment of very elevated costs, and we don’t know what lies ahead,” Bernis said. “This is another cost of waging a war in the 21st century.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Russia protests grow; police arrest 3,000
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/06/world/europe/police-russia-protests.html
GIST	<p>Despite the threat of yearslong prison terms, thousands of Russians joined antiwar rallies across the country on Sunday in a striking show of the pent-up anger in Russian society about President Vladimir V. Putin’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The police reported more than 3,000 arrests across the country — the highest nationwide total officially reported in any single day of protest in recent memory. An activist group that tracks arrests, OVD-Info, reported detentions in 49 different Russian cities.</p> <p>Video from independent Russian news outlets covering the protests showed throngs of people chanting “No to war!” on St. Petersburg’s central avenue, Nevsky Prospekt, and on Moscow’s Manezhnaya Square, just outside the Kremlin walls. Other clips showed protesters being beaten and kicked by the police, including next to a stand of balloons and gift boxes inside Moscow’s storied children’s department store, Detsky Mir — next door to the headquarters of the domestic intelligence agency, the F.S.B.</p> <p>In the city of Kaliningrad near the Baltic Sea, a woman protesting the war was recorded in a video posted on Twitter telling a police officer that she had survived the Nazi siege of Leningrad.</p>

“Are you here to support the fascists?” the officer responded, repeating the Kremlin narrative about the war in Ukraine, before calling over other policemen and telling them: “Arrest them all.”

The thousands of Russians who protested on Sunday represented only a slice of those furious over the invasion. Thousands more fled the country in the last 10 days, as their savings evaporated amid the collapse of the ruble and the West’s crushing sanctions.

“There is no more Russia,” Anton Dolin, one of Russia’s best-known film critics, wrote on Sunday, announcing his departure. “We are suffering a catastrophe — no, not an economic or political one. This is a moral catastrophe.”

In a phone interview from Latvia, Mr. Dolan, 46, described how he spent four hours in the cold waiting to cross the border on foot Saturday with his wife, two children, their dog and a few suitcases.

“We have realized we are most probably departing for a long time,” he said. “We never prepared for this departure and never in our lives even thought we would ever leave Russia.”

Mr. Putin remained defiant, despite phone calls with the presidents of France and Turkey on Sunday in which both leaders urged Russia to consider a cease-fire.

“An end to the special operation is only possible if Kyiv stops its military action and fulfills Russia’s well known demands,” the Kremlin said.

By Sunday, the Russian government had blocked access inside the country to the websites of virtually all popular independent media outlets reporting on the war. Mr. Putin on Friday signed a law punishing “false news” about the war with prison sentences of up to 15 years.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Line of succession Ukraine leaders security
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/us/politics/russia-ukraine-succession-zelensky.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Allied governments have been discussing how to secure the line of succession in Ukraine in the event President Volodymyr Zelensky is captured or killed by Russian forces, according to officials from multiple governments.</p> <p>The concerns are primarily about making sure there is still an independent Ukrainian government in some form, even if Russia finds a way to install a puppet leadership in Kyiv, the capital. Having an independent leader to recognize, Western officials said, will help prevent any Russian-backed leaders from gaining legitimacy.</p> <p>Mr. Zelensky’s presence and motivational speeches have been key factors in keeping up the morale of the Ukrainian military and people, and the officials said it was important that continued.</p> <p>The focus on securing succession comes, in part, because Ukraine’s Constitution is unclear on the issue and because Mr. Zelensky has said he does not want to be evacuated. He memorably quipped “I need ammunition, not a ride.” Despite news reports, American officials deny they ever offered to evacuate the president or advised him to leave. And Western governments have applauded his resolve to stay and fight as Russian troops try to advance across the country.</p> <p>The United States, Britain and the European Union would not recognize a government set up by Russia. Nevertheless, undermining a Moscow-controlled government in Kyiv will be easier for the United States and its allies if there is a legally recognized leader of a free Ukraine, rather than competing politicians vying for that role.</p> <p>Some practical and legal issues are at play as well. The European Union and NATO countries have been largely making their military and economic donations public as a way to show support for Ukraine.</p>

European countries have sent automatic weapons, Stinger anti-aircraft weapons, various anti-tank missiles and protective equipment to demonstrate that allies are intent on bolstering Ukraine's ability to damage Russian military forces.

Continuing such public support is far easier with a functional government to accept the aid, even if it is operating in western Ukraine or as a government-in-exile in Poland or Romania.

The United States has a long history of covertly providing arms to insurgent groups around the world. Such a program for Ukraine — which would require a formal but secret finding from President Biden — remains a possibility. But the longer the organized military leads the fight against Russia, the more likely Ukraine will be able to keep control of all or part of the country.

Over the last week, intense discussions in the White House and in closed-door meetings on Capitol Hill have focused on how to provide aid to Ukraine should Russia take over the capital. In that situation, the administration currently plans to continue overtly supplying weaponry to the Ukrainians.

The strong public signal of support, opposed to secret weapons programs, should help strengthen Ukraine's morale and demonstrate to Russia that the supply of weapons to the Ukrainian military was not going to stop, according to a person briefed on the discussion, who like others interviewed for this article spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive conversations with the Ukrainian government.

American officials have pushed the Ukrainians to not allow senior officials in the line of succession to remain in the same place for long periods, and have also urged that they be moved to safer locations outside Kyiv, said a person briefed on the conversations.

U.S. and allied officials would like the Ukrainian government to set up a location for the leadership to use should Kyiv fall, according to multiple officials. A presidential retreat in the Carpathian Mountains in western Ukraine could possibly be used, but Ukrainian officials have not said if the facility is outfitted with bomb shelters and hardened communications capabilities.

Under the Ukrainian Constitution, the speaker, or chairperson, of Parliament would succeed Mr. Zelensky as acting president. The current speaker, Ruslan Stefanchuk, is a pro-Western politician and former top aide to Mr. Zelensky. On Monday, Mr. Stefanchuk was pictured with Mr. Zelensky signing Ukraine's application for European Union membership. And on Friday, he participated in a virtual meeting with the president of the European Parliament.

U.S. and European officials said Mr. Stefanchuk and others in the line of succession were expected to continue to oppose the Russian invasion.

Ukrainian officials have resisted suggestions from U.S. and European officials to relocate Mr. Stefanchuk but have said they understand the need to ensure a legal succession, according to two people briefed on the conversations.

On Thursday, Mr. Zelensky held a news conference in a room where sandbags were stacked against the windows for protection. While he did not talk about succession, he did raise the possibility of dying.

Ukrainian officials have publicly said they are not interested in discussing succession and are focused on fighting, and winning, the war. Maryan Zablotsky, a member of Parliament who is in Mr. Zelensky's party, said in an interview he had heard no discussions on the succession issue.

The approach before the invasion, when Ukrainian officials were publicly skeptical that Russia would attack, has quickly given way to a more clear-eyed view of the situation. The Ukrainians are now ready to make wartime calls, say people briefed on the conversations.

For weeks ahead of the invasion, the United States and Britain warned about Moscow's desire to push Mr. Zelensky from power. They discussed how succession in Ukraine would work if they needed to counter a Russia-backed coup.

And despite the public rhetoric ahead of the invasion that the United States was overstating the threat, Mr. Zelensky privately took the warning more seriously and realized the Russians were intent on capturing or killing him, according to American officials.

During a visit to Kyiv in January, William J. Burns, the C.I.A. director, discussed the intelligence about the threat to Ukraine with Mr. Zelensky, according to a person briefed on the meeting. When Mr. Zelensky raised the issue of his family's safety, Mr. Burns replied that he needed to take both the threats to Ukraine and to himself seriously.

Since the invasion began in earnest, Russian officials have made plain that their intention is to push out the current government in Ukraine and install one friendly to Moscow. The State Department accused Russia of developing lists of Ukrainian politicians to arrest and seize as their forces moved forward.

"The importance of Zelensky's personality under current circumstances is beyond doubt," said Khrystyna Holynska, a Ukrainian who co-wrote a recent essay in The Hill newspaper about the succession issues. "If something happens to him, it would be very important to send a crystal clear message about who is leading the country now, how the government will be run."

Ms. Holynska, a researcher at the RAND Corporation, said while it might not be wise for Ukraine to publicize plans to relocate the government, she hoped it was ready to operate in locations outside Kyiv.

Beyond Mr. Stefanchuk, the speaker of Ukraine's Parliament, the line of succession is not entirely clear, said Ms. Holynska. When Mr. Zelensky and Mr. Stefanchuk became sick with Covid in 2020, Ukrainian legal scholars said the prime minister, Denys Shmyhal, would be third in line to take over.

The Ukrainian Constitution creates the positions of first deputy and deputy chairperson to take over the duties of the parliament speaker, though it does not explicitly say they are in a line of presidential succession.

"People should know who's next in line," Ms. Holynska said. "Right now is very Zelensky focused. He's in the news, he's everywhere. Losing this image of a leader will be not good for the resistance, for the will to fight, for the spirit in Ukraine."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Ukraine negotiator shot dead; Russia spy?
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10582805/Ukrainian-peace-negotiator-shot-dead-amid-claims-Russian-spy.html
GIST	<p>A Ukrainian peace negotiator has been shot dead ahead of the latest round of talks to end the war amid claims he was a Russian spy.</p> <p>Ukraine's Ministry of Defence said Denis Kireev, 45, was a spy and former banker who was killed during an operation to 'defend the nation'.</p> <p>After his death, the government hailed him as a 'hero' but MPs claimed he was shot and killed by Ukraine's security service after resisting arrest on suspicion of 'treason'.</p> <p>Mr Kireev was pictured sat on the Ukrainian side of the negotiating table during last week's peace talks with Russia on February 28, despite not being on the official delegation list, and his role at the summit is unclear.</p>

Both Russia and Ukraine have made claims about his alleged spying activities, each blaming him of working for the other side.

Russian newspaper Pravda reported that Ukraine's security service had 'clear evidence' of his suspected treason, which included telephone conversations.

An official statement from Ukraine's Ministry of Defence said: 'During the execution of special tasks, three spies were killed - employees of the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

'The fate of Alexei Ivanovich, Chibineev Valery Viktorovich, Denis Borisovich Kireev.

'They perished defending Ukraine, and their rank brought us closer to victory!

'We express our sincere condolences to the families of the victims.

'Heroes do not die! They live as long as we remember them!

'Glory to Ukraine! Glory to heroes!'

Photographs were posted online yesterday allegedly showing Mr Kireev dead before rumours that he was spying for Russia began circulating.

Russia claimed he was killed by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU), while senior Ukrainian politicians claimed he died while in SBU detention.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Boris Johnson has drawn up a six-point plan to defeat Vladimir Putin as he moves to assume leadership of global efforts to end the horror in Ukraine.

Vladimir Putin has faced an unprecedented wave of international fury for offering safe passage to Ukrainian refugees – only to bombard them with artillery as they fled.

Some 200,000 civilians had been set to leave the port city of Mariupol and 15,000 from Volnovakha in eastern Ukraine at 7am yesterday (UK time) as part of a temporary ceasefire deal overseen by the Red Cross.

However, just 400 refugees managed to flee Volnovakha before the ceasefire was shattered.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Colorado officials: rising threats of violence
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/5/colorado-secretary-of-state-wants-security-amid-th/
GIST	<p>DENVER (AP) — Across the political spectrum, Colorado’s elected officials say they’re facing increasingly significant threats of violence and online harassment just for doing their jobs.</p> <p>Now, state lawmakers are looking for new ways to provide more security for targeted officials to keep up with the rising need, so they can feel safer going about their work.</p> <p>“I think any person in the middle of a national conspiracy theory about election denialism who receives threat after threat after threat would take that seriously, which I do,” said Democratic Secretary of State Jena Griswold.</p> <p>Griswold appears frequently on national cable news to speak out against false claims about the 2020 presidential election, and has taken steps to prevent the kinds of outside “audits” conducted in Arizona. She said all of this has brought a slew of threats and highlighted the need to beef up security for statewide officials in particular.</p>

People on social media frequently call for Griswold's death, rhetoric that has also spilled into the real world. At a meeting in Castle Rock called by the right wing group FEC United last month, Shawn Smith, a prominent proponent of election conspiracy theories, claimed he had evidence of criminal conduct by Griswold.

"And I think if you're involved in election fraud, then you deserve to hang," he said to loud cheers and applause in a video of the event obtained by Colorado Newsline. He added, "sometimes the old ways are the best ways."

Smith then claimed he was not endorsing violence, but "when you put your hand on that hot stove, you get burned and you ought to see it coming."

After that meeting, followed by numerous online threats, Griswold asked for a weekend security detail while she felt the risk was heightened, but officers were only assigned to her home for a few hours.

Colorado State Patrol is responsible for providing security to the state's elected officials, but currently, the law only requires a full-time detail for the Governor. Lawmakers and other elected officials like Griswold can ask for short-term security, but how they respond to those requests is at the Patrol's discretion.

"I can't say, 'I need you here,' and they have to show up," Griswold said.

She calls the kinds of threats she's getting an attack on democracy. Griswold's office has asked for \$120,000 in state funding so she can hire private security.

- Griswold's request has been met with skepticism by some in the statehouse

Republican lawmakers say they've also faced threats but oppose using state money for private security, especially if security guards could end up being used outside of official state business.

Republican state Rep. Mary Bradfield notes that Secretary Griswold is running for reelection.

"And I don't know how you're going to separate her public appearances as the Secretary of State from her appearances as a candidate, because some of those get blurred," she said.

Another option would be to expand the mission of state patrol to include ongoing security for more elected officials.

Col. Matthew Packard, chief of the Patrol, agrees that the horrible comments against officials like Griswold and others have become more frequent now than at any time in recent memory.

"There are people that are willing to say awful things, from the confines of their computer ... (But) a lot of that is protected by the First Amendment, and so there's a balance for that," he said. "To the extent that that rhetoric has a negative impact on somebody's safety, we stand poised and ready to address that, within the confines of people's constitutional rights."

State Patrol is asking for more money to increase security at the state capitol and surrounding buildings, recruit more officers and pay for overtime to respond to some of these credible threats.

- Other lawmakers support additional security for politicians, and are also familiar with harassment

One bill this session would go further than that. As introduced, SB-133 would allow statewide officials like Griswold to appeal State Patrol's security decisions if they don't agree. It would also include money to provide security for state lawmakers at public events and town halls and streamline the process to make those security requests.

“Making sure that you feel safe talking to the public is an essential part of our democracy,” said Democratic state Sen. Faith Winter, who’s sponsoring the bill along with Republican state Sen. Kevin Priola.

SB-133 hasn’t had a committee hearing yet and is expected to change throughout the process - Winter already plans to amend the bill to give all statewide officials up to 80 hours of security a week if they feel like they need it.

In general, Winter said she believes it’s important to set up better procedures for security and threat monitoring, in part to give people the confidence to go into public life.

“I recruit and train women to run for office, and more and more frequently all over the country women have been saying, ‘I don’t know if I want to run because I don’t feel safe. I don’t feel safe for my family,’” Winter said.

Democratic state Rep. Leslie Herod knows firsthand what it can be like to live with those kinds of threats. She’s been one of the most outspoken voices at the capitol on police reform, which has led to ongoing backlash, including being called a “terrorist” by the Weld County Sheriff last year.

“I have had to change the way that I do certain things in my life. And I don’t want to go too far into it, but my life has changed since I’ve received so many threats,” she said.

- There are other proposals upping protections for civil servants

Before this year’s debate over in-person security for elected officials, state lawmakers were already moving to crack down on those who go after people in public life.

Last year, the legislature voted overwhelmingly to increase the penalty for threatening an elected official. And they’ve also made efforts to try to help lower profile civil servants too. A measure to increase penalties for threatening public health workers - or exposing their personal information to encourage others to harass them - became law with wide bipartisan support.

This year, lawmakers are working on a bill that would make it illegal to publish the personal information of election workers publicly - a practice known as doxxing - and allow those workers and their immediate family members to remove their private information from open records requests. It also increases the penalties for threats and intimidation.

Lawmakers in both political parties lament how the public discourse has deteriorated to the point where these measures are necessary. One called the entire security discussion “tragic” but added, “This is where we are.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Judge slams exempting kids at border
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/mar/4/judge-rules-biden-overreached-exempting-kids-borde/
GIST	<p>A federal judge on Friday slammed President Biden’s decision to grant an exemption to illegal immigrant children at the border by allowing them to enter while other migrants are turned back amid the pandemic.</p> <p>Judge Mark T. Pittman said the exemption makes no sense since children can spread COVID-19, too. He ordered the government to undo the exemption and treat so-called Unaccompanied Alien Children, or UACs, the same as other illegal immigrants.</p> <p>The decision is the latest scorching judicial rebuke to Mr. Biden’s immigration policies, with courts finding the president’s moves filled with contradictions.</p>

In the case of UACs, Judge Pittman said the government conceded they can spread the virus, and didn't offer any real medical justification for why they should be treated differently than other illegal immigrants who are turned back at the border under a Trump-era pandemic emergency order, known as Title 42.

"And instead of trying to prevent UAC from spreading the viruses they are potentially carrying to the interior of the United States, the Government chose to send UAC away from the facilities where the Government could monitor them and their health," Judge Pittman ruled.

Under Title 42, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention decision, the government is supposed to turn back illegal immigrants to prevent them from introducing more cases of the coronavirus into the U.S.

The Trump administration triggered the power in 2020 and the Biden administration has kept it in place, though early on it carved out an exemption for UACs, saying the Trump team was cruel to oust children who may have just made a long, treacherous journey without parents.

The result of the carve-out was a record-shattering surge of children rushing to the border, overwhelming the government's ability to handle them.

Biden officials said the UAC exemption could help stop the spread of the virus at the border from one child to another. But Judge Pittman said that didn't answer any of the other questions about whether children would then spread the virus to others inside the U.S.

"Of course, evidence might show that excepting UAC does not spread — or increase the risk of spreading — COVID-19 to the interior of the United States. But the Government failed to make that showing," he wrote.

His ruling came just hours after another ruling by a three-judge panel of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, which also backed Title 42 — though with significant skepticism and caveats.

In that case, the judges ruled that the administration is likely on firm legal ground in using Title 42 to turn back illegal immigrants.

But the panel also ruled that probably should not be sent back to countries where they face risks of persecution or torture.

Immigrant-rights advocates have argued that Title 42 violates the government's duty to allow illegal immigrants to claim asylum.

The judges said that's not the case — though they did chide the administration for sticking with a two-year-old policy.

"The CDC's ... order looks in certain respects like a relic from an era with no vaccines, scarce testing, few therapeutics, and little certainty," wrote Judge Justin R. Walker for the unanimous panel.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Japan foreign policy more assertive
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/05/japan-ukraine-russia-foreign-policy/
GIST	<p>Japan this week announced it would accept refugees from Ukraine and send bulletproof vests to Kyiv — extraordinary measures taken by a country that has historically been unwelcoming to refugees and also has a self-imposed arms exports ban because of its militaristic past.</p> <p>They were decisions made without “gaiatsu,” or foreign pressure, several Japanese officials note, underscoring Japan’s determination to show it will not stand for Moscow’s behavior, a stance that defies the pacifist values that undergird postwar Japanese identity.</p>

Russia's troubling actions — most recently its attack on a Ukrainian nuclear power plant — have triggered a deep alarm that is likely to accelerate Japan's debate over defense and security policies that had been underway amid China's growing territorial threat.

The perilous international situation has raised urgent questions about Japan's readiness and crisis management capabilities under its war-renouncing constitution, and has brought Japan closer than ever to significantly raising its defense spending — a long-standing and controversial debate — as a part of its national security policy review this year.

"It's a big awakening that there are limitations to what the U.N. can do, limitations to what diplomacy can do, limitations to what economic sanctions can do," said Akihisa Shiozaki, a member of the governing Liberal Democratic Party who pushed for the change on refugees. "It's not about rewriting the boundaries of what Japan can do, but filling in the details of what we may not fully anticipate, or may have overlooked, in our preparation."

Shiozaki pointed to the shift on refugees as an example of one of those aspects of preparation. "In considering future crisis scenarios in East Asia, including the Taiwan contingency, it is necessary to build and maintain the capacity to respond to refugees in times of emergency, even in peacetime," he said. Details of Japan's refugee decision are pending, and it remains to be seen how many refugees it will accept.

Although the invasion has reconfigured the security landscape in Europe within a matter of days, the full impact in the Indo-Pacific region remains to be seen, and experts are debating whether the invasion of Ukraine will mark a turning point for Japan's postwar security policy in the same way that the 1991 Persian Gulf War rattled Japan's diplomacy and national security policy.

Japan is closely watching Germany, a World War II ally that also adopted pacifist policies as a legacy of its wartime aggression. Germany has made seismic moves in response to the Russian invasion, upending decades of societal consensus on defense spending, direct intervention in wars and the nature of country's ties to Moscow.

"Japan is watching now, very much attentively, how Germany is responding to the Ukraine crisis and how fundamentally Germany is transforming to adapt itself to new reality," said Yoichi Funabashi, the chairman of the Tokyo-based think tank Asia Pacific Initiative and a former editor in chief of the Asahi Shimbun newspaper.

Four days after the attack, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced a vast increase in defense spending, which appears to be backed by a public that had long been as indifferent as its political leaders to the country's failure to meet NATO spending commitments.

Scholz had already approved the delivery of weapons to Ukraine over the weekend — a move that also broke with long-standing tradition and could have ripple effects across the European Union.

When asked at a recent news conference whether Japan plans to ramp up its defense spending, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida answered that "Japan needs to implement a fundamental upgrade of its defense capabilities."

In just the past week, Japan has taken uncharacteristically swift steps to join Western allies in financially pressuring Russia and Belarus and aiding Ukraine. Tokyo committed more than \$200 million of support for Ukraine and issued sanctions targeting Russian oligarchs and banks as well as top Belarusian officials. It also diverted at least 210,000 tons of surplus liquefied natural gas to Europe to make up for a possible disruption of energy supplies from Russia.

"Prime Minister Kishida has stepped up and stepped onto the global stage in a significant way," U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel said in an interview. "Japan is responding on a global scale with the

speed we have not seen, and is making a difference. It has made the opposition to Russia a global one, not just European.”

Japan’s assertive steps were made possible by the years of effort by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who worked to deepen Japan’s ties with Europe and with countries throughout the Indo-Pacific region, experts say. Those efforts increased when the United States retreated on the global stage during the “America First” Trump era, when Japan began to more clearly articulate its values and foreign policy positions in the relative absence of its security ally.

Japan is reaping the benefits of investing in its European diplomacy in those years, particularly as it took a more assertive role in sustaining the postwar order in Washington’s absence, said Sheila Smith, a Japanese foreign policy and politics expert at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Many in Japan say the country’s actions underscore its resolve to remain a steadfast U.S. ally despite its shock over President Biden’s withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan, and despite the United States’ pulling out of a major trade agreement that it brokered in the Asia-Pacific region — only to return with a vague economic “framework” that has yet to be defined.

“Japan has gradually started to learn how to be vocal, how to really articulate its values, position our diplomacy, particularly throughout the Trump administration for four years, because Japan has had to,” said Funabashi, the AP Initiative chairman. “Finally, proactive diplomacy has started to emerge.”

Japan’s approach has been a dramatic shift from 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and Japan only reluctantly agreed to join the West on sanctions out of concern for its rapprochement with Russia to resolve a long-standing territorial dispute.

For now, Japan has put those efforts on hold. The Russian invasion has deepened Japan’s fears that without a strong response alongside the Group of Seven major economies, it risks emboldening China’s growing assertiveness and the worsening of relations between China and the island of Taiwan.

“This is the occasion to show our solidarity, and if we let these kind of things happen, our neighbor — Russia’s neighbor, as well — may take such action as well, that can change the status quo, and that’s not what we want to see,” said Ichiro Fujisaki, a former Japanese ambassador to the United States. “I’m talking about China, of course.”

The Japanese public’s outpouring of support for Ukrainians also marks a shift from previous crises, including the Afghanistan withdrawal, and provides domestic support for Japan’s assertive approach, said Smith, the Council on Foreign Relations expert.

“It helps the government’s foreign policy efforts to have this deep sympathy for Ukraine within Japanese society,” she said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Ukraine military adapts tactics, strategy
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2022/03/05/ukraine-military-strategy/
GIST	<p>An outgunned but resilient Ukrainian military is adopting a two-prong strategy in the face of a flawed but fierce Russian assault, relying on hit-and-run tactics and the fortification of major cities as President Vladimir Putin’s campaign enters a more perilous phase, military experts said.</p> <p>The odds remain stacked against Ukraine, even as it exceeds Western intelligence assessments that had predicted Kyiv, the capital, would fall within days. Russian forces have begun employing siege tactics, aiming to flatten civilian infrastructure and exact maximum punishment for Ukrainian resistance. While Russia has mostly failed, so far, to seize major cities and effectively supply its soldiers with food and fuel, the Pentagon believes it is probable that Russia will regroup and press its massive advantage in firepower.</p>

John Spencer, a retired Army officer who studies urban warfare for the Madison Policy Forum, said Ukraine's top objective is to make the war as bloody as possible for Russia, as it does not appear Putin will withdraw anytime soon. Giving up secondary cities may become necessary to allow the Ukrainian government to endure in the capital as long as possible, he said.

"Not losing is winning in this case," Spencer said. "The Ukrainian strategy is not to lose."

Russia has bombarded Kyiv mostly with artillery and other long-range weapons, as a 40-mile convoy of tanks and other combat vehicles effectively remains stalled about 15 miles north of the capital and bogged down with logistical setbacks, a senior U.S. defense official told reporters Friday on the condition of anonymity, citing ground rules established by the Pentagon.

In other parts of the country, however, Russia's advances are more significant.

In the northeastern city of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest, Russian forces have reached the outskirts after pounding neighborhoods with missiles, rockets and other weapons for days, the senior U.S. defense official said.

In the south, Putin's forces also have advanced on [the strategically important port city of Mariupol](#), occupied the smaller cities of Berdyansk, Melitopol and Kherson, and appear to have set their sights farther west on Mykolaiv, a city of about 470,000 people. Continued success there would allow the Russians to look even farther west and assault Odessa, a port city of nearly 1 million people, possibly both by land and an amphibious assault by naval forces on ships in the Black Sea.

Ukrainian officials have indicated that after surviving the initial invasion, they intend to launch a counteroffensive against Russian forces. That is likely to favor armed ambushes rather than a major, open assault on the numerically superior Russian military, said Douglas London, a retired senior CIA officer and an analyst at the Middle East Institute.

"They're not going to be able to mount a major counterattack, organize the troops and go, 'Charge!' It's going to be an asymmetrical effort to break up Russian attacks," London said. "The Russians have a lot of static targets because of their own logistical problems, and that's just gold for a harassing special-operations force operating in the rear. That's just what they do."

London predicted that, given Russia's vast military advantage, Putin will press his advantage and Ukrainian forces will eventually have to adjust again.

"I don't see him going gently into that good night," London said of Putin. "Ukraine will eventually lose the cities, or reach a point where they can't resupply them, and they'll have to transition to more of an insurgency or urban underground" operation.

Attacking Russian support lines already has proved to be a significant strategy to reduce Russia's advantages, said Andriy Zagorodnyuk, a former defense minister of Ukraine. Russian vehicles are spread across a wide area on multiple fronts, and they're constantly idling to keep soldiers warm in cold weather, Zagorodnyuk said, making diesel replenishment an enormous challenge.

The Ukrainian military has advised civilian defense volunteers to ignore armored vehicles and instead attack fuel trucks, which are unarmored and often driven by poorly trained Russian soldiers. Cutting off the fuel supply turns tanks and rocket artillery vehicles into road obstacles, said Zagorodnyuk, now chairman of the Center for Defense Strategies, a Ukrainian think tank.

With Russian vehicles holding in place, Ukrainian forces have attacked, leaving smoldering wrecks and giving Russian soldiers a grim choice: stay inside their vehicle where they're vulnerable to a possible missile strike, or try to escape on foot and face the likelihood of being shot or captured. Videos posted on social media and authenticated by The Washington Post show some Russian vehicles were probably abandoned.

Russia's advantage is fighting conventional battles with tanks and mechanized infantry, said Rob Lee, a Russia military expert and a senior fellow with the Foreign Policy Research Institute. The opportunity for Ukraine to undercut that, he said, is to focus attacks with antitank weapons and anti-aircraft missiles and target forces in the dark using modern night-vision goggles and thermal optics.

Rep. Jason Crow (D-Colo.), an Army veteran who fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, visited Ukraine in recent weeks. That its military remains decentralized — one of the deficiencies preventing Ukraine from joining NATO — might be among its best assets in this war, he said in an interview.

"Disparate pockets of resistance, and you're seeing battalion-level units fighting independently, which ... is maybe a blessing in disguise," Crow said. "It's actually helping them now, because ... they're not relying on the centralized command-and-control systems.

"They have a unique opportunity now to attrit Russian forces rapidly because they're so messed up."

Spencer, the urban warfare expert, said that inside cities, Ukrainians are increasingly adopting "defense in depth," making it as difficult as possible for invading Russian forces to maneuver easily and survive. Bridges have been blown, tires and barricades have been piled in roads, and citizens have armed themselves with rifles, molotov cocktails and other weapons. He said he is unconvinced that Russia has enough forces to prevent Ukrainians in the capital from [receiving additional arms](#).

History is filled with examples of a relatively small number of fighters digging into a city and its many alleys, rooftops and tunnels, and holding off a large assault for long periods of time, Spencer said. He cited the Battle of Mosul, in which Islamic State militants held out for nine months beginning in fall 2016 as Iraqi forces backed by U.S. air power took back a major city, block by block.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Spain cuts more quarantine requirements
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/05/world/covid-19-tests-cases-vaccine?name=styln-coronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#spain-removes-more-quarantine-requirements-another-step-in-europes-halting-move-toward-normality
GIST	<p>People in close contact with those who have tested positive for the coronavirus in Spain are, as of Saturday, no longer required to quarantine, regardless of their vaccination status.</p> <p>Instead, the country's Health Ministry recommends that those exposed to an infected person exercise caution and act responsibly. A similar rule for vaccinated people had been lifted recently, and this extension was attributed in part to lower case rates, the government said.</p> <p>The change is expected to particularly affect schools, some of which have had to quarantine entire classrooms after detecting cases among students. Children under 12 are less likely to have completed their vaccination program, and only about 17 percent of the age group is fully vaccinated, according to government data.</p> <p>The removal of the quarantine requirement underscores the distance Spain has traveled since early in the pandemic. Spain was the second country in Europe to impose sweeping restrictions on the public in 2020, including asking people to stay indoors, with some exceptions, and forcing schools, restaurants, bars and nonessential businesses to close. Eager to return to some semblance of normality and to welcome tourists, Spain relaxed its restrictions later that year, but then faced a second wave of cases and became one of the hardest-hit countries in Europe.</p> <p>Like other nations, Spain has tried to balance economic concerns with health concerns as new variants and surges have emerged. And it has had a successful vaccination campaign: More than 80 percent of Spain's population is fully vaccinated, according to the Our World in Data project at the University of Oxford.</p>

Spain has joined a number of other countries in Europe in recently [easing restrictions](#). The strategies and situations across the continent have varied, with some taking a [more staggered approach](#) and others more immediately trying to [“live with the virus.”](#)

Some officials have acknowledged [that the pandemic is not over](#) but have cited the effectiveness of vaccines and the lower likelihood of the Omicron variant [causing severe illness](#) as part of the reason to adopt a bolder strategy. In England, legal coronavirus restrictions, like the requirement for those who test positive to isolate, [have been lifted](#).

But some experts have warned that [any protection from a previous infection](#) may fade over time or not be effective against future [variants of the virus](#). And others have said that the authorities should be cautious not to send the message that the pandemic was over.

Roberto Burioni, a leading Italian virologist, said that while the protection offered by vaccines was a game changer and that warmer spring weather allowed for some optimism, the moves by several European countries to scrap nearly all coronavirus restrictions were political — and a gamble.

He was particularly critical of England’s sweeping rollbacks, saying that he feared that approach could send a dangerous signal.

“The message that you can afford to not give a damn is never correct, because we are talking about health here,” he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Boise mayor: violent threats, harassment
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/05/world/covid-19-tests-cases-vaccine?name=styl-coronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#boises-mayor-who-championed-covid-restrictions-says-she-faces-violent-threats-and-harassment
GIST	<p>Lauren McLean, the mayor of Boise, Idaho, said that she has faced “real and grave” threats during her term, which has been marked by aggressive demonstrations against Covid-19 restrictions that she and other state officials put in place.</p> <p>In a nearly 900-word statement that her office shared on Thursday, Ms. McLean, a Democrat, said she had faced protests with torches and pitchforks outside her home and “sinister thwarted plots” against her. Ms. McLean said she was discussing the threats in public because violent intimidation had driven other officials to resign from their posts.</p> <p>“I understand the decision to leave public office because I still feel intensely the fear, frustration, and helplessness of watching my two children quietly take in news of thwarted threats against me and learning that they, too, were being targeted and tracked online,” Ms. McLean’s statement said.</p> <p>Ms. McLean said that, after consulting with her family, she had decided to stay in office. She also said that she had made changes to her professional and personal life, including traveling with a security detail, ending her early morning trail runs and sharing less information about her family online.</p> <p>Ms. McLean did not specifically mention the coronavirus in the statement, though several of the protests she described taking place outside her home in 2020 were against Covid restrictions.</p> <p>Boise is lifting its mask mandate in city buildings and ending restrictions on the size of gatherings on Monday. The changes follow a significant drop in Covid cases, hospitalizations and deaths in Idaho in recent weeks.</p> <p>In Idaho, coronavirus vaccines and pandemic public health rules have been especially divisive. Only 53 percent of Idaho residents are fully vaccinated, which is one of the lowest rates in the country, according to a New York Times database.</p>

	<p>In August 2020, dozens of unmasked protesters, some of them armed, forced their way into the state's House of Representatives chamber, pushing past state troopers to protest laws related to the pandemic. Among them was Ammon Bundy, who led an armed standoff against federal agents in Oregon in 2016. Mr. Bundy was acquitted of federal conspiracy and weapons charges in the Oregon case. He was convicted of trespassing in the Idaho protest but returned to the Idaho Capitol building repeatedly.</p> <p>In December 2020, Ms. McLean and the Boise police ended a virtual meeting held by the city's public health agency out of concern over protests outside the agency's headquarters and the homes of at least three members of its board.</p> <p>Ms. McLean's statement said that she had tried not to call attention to "militia-affiliated" crowds that gathered outside her own home, but that she wanted to describe the threats against her and her family so that other public leaders experiencing harassment would feel less isolated.</p> <p>Ms. McLean, the first woman elected mayor of Boise, was a member of the Boise City Council from 2011 until 2019, when she won the mayoral election. She assumed office in January 2020, with the pandemic dominating much of her tenure.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Pandemic adds to burden health care debt
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/03/05/world/covid-19-tests-cases-vaccine?name=stlncoronavirus&region=hub&block=storyline_live_updates_block_recirc&action=click&pgtype=LegacyCollection#americans-say-the-pandemic-has-added-to-the-burden-of-health-care-debt
GIST	<p>While mask mandates and coronavirus vaccines have been the focus of discussions from Capitol Hill to Times Square in recent weeks, a constant problem in the United States health system, medical debt, has persisted in the pandemic and may have worsened, according to several recent surveys.</p> <p>Most major health insurers voluntarily waived costs tied to Covid-19 treatment at the beginning of the pandemic, but insurers ended these benefits as virus infections persisted into late 2021. Even when the assistance was in place, many insured people still reported facing exorbitant costs after a bout with Covid, for services like the use of an air ambulance or an extended hospital stay.</p> <p>The pandemic also disrupted the economy, creating an unemployment crisis in 2020 that put a further strain on the ability of Americans to pay medical bills. And while the Labor Department reported a strong month of hiring in February and an unemployment rate of 3.8 percent, that rate still isn't back to where it was before the pandemic.</p> <p>In a small online poll of 1,250 Americans conducted in February and released this week, 56 percent of adults said they had medical debt, according to Affordable Health Insurance, a website that provides information about insurance plans. Of that group, 30 percent said they had acquired medical debt from Covid treatment.</p> <p>It is the latest of several surveys conducted during the pandemic that suggest an increase in the number of Americans reporting medical debt compared with prepandemic figures from the U.S. Census Bureau.</p> <p>In 2017, 19 percent of American households had medical debt, according to the Survey of Income and Program Participation from the Census Bureau.</p> <p>A study published in July by the Commonwealth Fund, a nonprofit that conducts research on health policy, said that 38 percent of adults confirmed that they or a family member had had a problem paying medical bills in the previous 12 months. The Commonwealth Fund surveyed 5,450 Americans, a larger group than the study released this week.</p>

	<p>In a December survey of nearly 3,000 people by Healthcare.com, 35 percent of respondents said they had medical debt.</p> <p>In the survey released this week, 73 percent of the people with medical debt said that it had prevented them from doing things such as buying a home, saving for retirement and getting married.</p> <p>To pay off these debts, 25 percent of people said they were negotiating with their health insurers, 21 percent were borrowing money from family and friends and 14 percent were considering declaring bankruptcy.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/05 Putin mindset altered by Covid isolation?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/world/putin-pandemic-mindset.html
GIST	<p>The White House effort to design a strategy to confront Russia over its invasion of Ukraine is linked to an urgent re-examination by intelligence agencies of President Vladimir V. Putin's mental state. The debate is over whether his ambitions and appetite for risk have been altered by two years of Covid isolation, or by a sense that this may be his best moment to rebuild Russia's sphere of influence and secure his legacy. Or both.</p> <p>Throughout the pandemic, Mr. Putin has retreated into an intricate cocoon of social distancing — though he allowed life in Russia to essentially return to normal. The Federal Protective Service, Russia's answer to the Secret Service, built a virus-free bubble around Mr. Putin that far outstrips the protective measures taken by many of his foreign counterparts.</p> <p>Mr. Putin has been holding most of his meetings with government officials by video conference, often appearing in a spartan room in his Moscow estate, Novo-Ogaryovo. Even when foreign dignitaries arrived, they sometimes didn't get to see Mr. Putin in person; the secretary general of the United Nations, António Guterres, had to make do with a video meeting when he visited Moscow last year.</p> <p>Now Mr. Putin has in-person visitors — including the Israeli prime minister, Naftali Bennett, who met with Mr. Putin for about three hours on Saturday. (Mr. Putin's residence and the Kremlin are outfitted with disinfectant tunnels that all visitors must pass through.)</p> <p>Some of the world leaders who have met with Mr. Putin in recent diplomatic overtures were seated 20 feet from him at a behemoth of a table, having refused to submit to Russian P.C.R. tests that would make their DNA available to the Russians. Otherwise, people who meet him face-to-face generally have spent as long as two weeks in quarantine first.</p> <p>Mr. Putin's extreme caution reflects not only his age — he is 69, putting him at relatively high risk of severe illness from the coronavirus — but also what critics describe as paranoia honed during his former career as a K.G.B. spy.</p> <p>And the Russian leader's tendency, American intelligence officials have told the White House and Congress, is to double down when he feels trapped by his own overreach. So they have described a series of possible reactions, ranging from indiscriminate shelling of Ukrainian cities to compensate for the early mistakes made by his invading force, to cyberattacks directed at the American financial system, to more nuclear threats and perhaps moves to take the war beyond Ukraine's borders.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/05 Pakistan police: bomber, network identified
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/world/middleeast/pakistan-peshawar-suicide-bomber.html
GIST	<p>PESHAWAR, Pakistan — Pakistani police investigators said on Saturday that they had identified the suicide bomber and the network behind the deadly blast on Friday at a Shiite mosque in Peshawar, in northwestern Pakistan, that left at least 63 dead and nearly 200 wounded.</p>

Thirty-seven people remained hospitalized, with five in critical condition, according to Muhammad Asim Khan, the spokesman for Peshawar's largest hospital, Lady Reading.

The Islamic State's regional affiliate, [Islamic State Khorasan, or ISIS-K](#), claimed responsibility for the attack and said it was carried out by an Afghan suicide bomber, whom the militant group identified as Julaibeed al-Kabuli.

Pakistani security officials said that the name was an alias and that they had identified the attacker and his family.

Muhammad Ali Saif, a special assistant to the provincial chief minister, said at a news conference on Saturday that "the rest of the network will be exposed in the next 48 hours." He declined to share more details, citing operational sensitivities.

Other security officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the case and continuing investigations, said the bomber was an Afghan national who had migrated to Pakistan decades ago and lived in the country along with his family. The officials said the bomber's parents had informed the police of their son's disappearance and suspected he had joined ISIS.

Investigators say the bomber trained in Afghanistan and appeared to have returned recently.

A senior Pakistani police official said the police had made significant progress in their investigation, combing through hours of CCTV footage and forensic evidence to identify the attacker's network.

The bombing on Friday adds a new complexity for law enforcement agencies that are already confronting a resurgent Taliban in Pakistan. Baluch separatists in the country's southwest have also carried out attacks in recent months.

Security officials say ISIS-K continues to operate from neighboring Afghanistan, but after being targeted by the Afghan Taliban, it has dispersed across the country, no longer operates in large groups and holds no physical territory.

Officials monitoring the militants' situation in Afghanistan say that nearly 1,600 ISIS-K fighters escaped when the Taliban overran the notorious Pul-e-Charkhi prison on the outskirts of Kabul, the Afghan capital, shortly before taking it over in August.

The Taliban have either captured or killed nearly half of the escaped ISIS-K militants since then, but many are still at large, including some Pakistanis, officials say.

Pakistan approached the new Taliban leadership in Kabul for information regarding the escaped militants, but was told that whatever prison records existed had been burned shortly before the Taliban took the prison, according to a Pakistani security official.

In Peshawar on Saturday, a pall enveloped the old part of the city as funeral prayers were held for several of the dead. Many families of the dead planned to bury their loved ones in Peshawar, while others planned to bury them in their native Kurram tribal district on the border with Afghanistan.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Florida wildfire growing; evacuations
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/us/florida-bay-county-wildfire.html
GIST	<p>Over 600 homes have been evacuated in Bay County on the Florida Panhandle as a fast-moving wildfire that has been burning since Friday afternoon continued to resist containment efforts.</p> <p>By Saturday afternoon, 24 hours after the Adkins Avenue fire began near Panama City, Fla., it had burned more than 1,400 acres and was 30 percent contained, the Florida Forest Service said on Twitter.</p>

More evacuation orders have been put in place since Friday. In a statement on Saturday morning, the Bay County Sheriff's Office [said on Facebook](#) that residents of the neighboring Bylsma Manor Estates needed to "gather your personal items and leave."

The fire was caused by someone burning debris in a backyard, Valerie Sale, a spokeswoman for Bay County, said on Saturday.

Bay County issued an evacuation order on Friday that is still in effect. A burn ban was also issued in the area and in neighboring counties, Ms. Sale said. Gov. Ron DeSantis issued an [executive order](#) declaring a state of emergency in Bay County on Friday evening.

At least two homes have been fully destroyed and as many as 12 have been damaged, Ms. Sale estimated. She said that number is likely to go up.

There have been no reported injuries or fatalities, she said. An emergency shelter for evacuees has been set up at [Hiland Park Baptist Church](#) in Panama City.

The Bay County Office of Emergency Management got a call at 1:59 p.m. on Friday that a fire was growing out of control. For over a day, multiple county departments have been involved in efforts to contain the flames, Ms. Sale said.

According to a [post](#) on the [Bay County Emergency Services' Facebook page](#), more than 200 firefighters from Bay County and throughout the Panhandle "are on the ground working on establishing containment lines and protecting structures." The Florida Forest Service has 70 firefighters operating bulldozers, tractors, engines and other heavy equipment on the ground.

There is no estimate as to when the fire will be fully contained since conditions in the area have made it hard to control the flames, Ms. Sale said.

"The problem that we're dealing with is that it is very, very dry and very windy and the humidity is very low," Ms. Sale explained. Bay County also has debris left over from [Hurricane Michael](#) in 2018, she said.

"We have thousands of acres of trees that have been dead and drying out since then," creating problematic conditions that are conducive to a fire, she added.

The National Weather Service in Tallahassee said there would most likely be [decreased visibility because of fog and smoke from the fire](#) and warned that the dry conditions had caused "an uptick" in wildfires in the state.

On Saturday afternoon, hours after the Florida Forest Service warned that "[fire danger levels are elevated statewide](#)," the agency [issued an update on Twitter](#) saying there were 148 active wildfires burning 7,100 acres across the state.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Powerful storms rampage across Iowa
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/us/iowa-tornado-deaths.html
GIST	<p>At least seven people were killed, including two children, in Iowa on Saturday as communities across the state were battered by what the authorities said appeared to be tornadoes.</p> <p>Six of the deaths occurred in Madison County, and a seventh was reported in Chariton, a city in Lucas County, officials said.</p> <p>In Madison County, four adults were injured, including three who were in serious condition and one who had life-threatening injuries, said Diogenes Ayala, the director of the Madison County Emergency Management Agency.</p>

“The best thing the community can do is just to not go to these areas,” Mr. Ayala said at a news conference late Saturday. “Let people that are living there — let them clean up. Give them some space. This is pretty devastating for our community.”

Mr. Ayala said that people should call the authorities if they know someone who is missing.

The deaths in Madison County — including two children younger than 5 — occurred at different locations. Mr. Ayala did not disclose more details about the deaths because some victims’ families had yet to be notified.

Mr. Ayala estimated that 25 to 30 homes had been destroyed but said a fuller assessment would come in the morning.

[The National Weather Service said](#) that a preliminary examination of photos and videos from around Winterset, a city in Madison County, suggested damage from a tornado with wind speeds of more than 135 miles per hour.

The agency’s survey teams will further investigate the damage on Sunday, officials said.

[Video posted](#) on social media and recorded south of Winterset showed the aftermath of the severe weather: piles of debris, smoke and a car flipped upside down.

Officials in Lucas County did not release details about the death there, also because family members had not been notified. Another person was seriously injured, a few had minor injuries, and four to six homes in the rural area were “majorly impacted,” Mike Lamb, the emergency management coordinator for Lucas County, said late Saturday.

Tornadoes are “fairly common” in Iowa, Mr. Lamb said. “It’s not an uncommon occurrence,” he added. “But tornadoes of these magnitudes that cause damage are rare, or rarer.”

Several homes in Norwalk, about 10 miles south of Des Moines, were damaged along with the city’s public works site and some local businesses, said Shelby Hisel, a city spokeswoman.

As of late Saturday, no injuries had been reported in Norwalk. Ms. Hisel was not sure whether the damage was the result of a tornado or another extreme weather event, such as high winds, and said the city would assess the damage in the morning.

The Des Moines International Airport was evacuated for more than 20 minutes as a precaution in response to a tornado warning, causing flight delays, said Kayla Kovarna, an airport spokeswoman.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 China opposes sanctions; continue trade
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-opposes-sanctions-and-has-a-reputation-for-busting-them-11646562600?mod=hp_lead_pos4
GIST	<p>Under international agreements, North Korea isn’t supposed to be able to export its coal. That its smugglers have been doing so right under China’s nose is one reason Beijing is in focus as sanctions bear down on Russia.</p> <p>Chinese companies have repeatedly dodged restrictions on trading with countries like North Korea, Iran and Venezuela, according to sanctions investigators from United Nations panels of experts, the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control and other monitors. A U.N. panel’s report six months ago, for example, documented how North Korea-connected vessels illegally made 41 coal transfers in about four months just offshore from China’s busiest port.</p>

Western actions to sever many of Russia's ties to the global economy as punishment for [its war on Ukraine](#) could be less effective if China offers Moscow access to what some see as [the bazaar of choice](#) for rogue nations.

Sanctions-busting [on Russia's behalf](#) would be large-scale, requiring forthright state involvement such as deals with big government-run firms or the application of laws designed to undermine foreign sanctions. It is typically small-time traders who get involved with North Korea, monitors say.

As the world's second-biggest economy and its top trading nation, China has the wherewithal to set its own course on sanctions, and its government is reflexively distrustful of U.S.-led rule making. The size and fragmentation of China's market, with over 5,800 merchant ships, seven of the world's 10 busiest shipping ports and tens of thousands of bank branches can help hide nefarious activity.

China is also at the cutting edge of developing technology designed as alternatives to Western-backed systems, like a bank money-transfer service modeled on the Swift network and a digital version of its currency, as well as undersea- and satellite-telecommunication links it controls.

Sanctions monitors say evidence suggests Chinese officials sometimes turn a blind eye to evasion. How else, they ask, do North Korean smugglers manage to dodge controls in one of the world's most efficient surveillance states.

Business licenses, satellite photographs and other documentation in the U.N. panel's 261-page report support its conclusions that North Korean-flagged and -controlled vessels in waters near the Chinese port of Ningbo between February and May last year illegally unloaded 364,000 metric tons of their nation's coal onto other ships, including some sailing under Chinese flags.

"China has always earnestly implemented the Security Council resolutions on North Korea and fulfilled its due international obligations," its Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. It said China had responded to the U.N. panel in a responsible manner and drew attention to the group's references to the negative impact of sanctions on the livelihoods of North Koreans. The U.N. report quotes China's government as saying the suspect vessels hadn't called on its ports and it notes sanctions would continue to have negative humanitarian consequences.

China opposes economic sanctions in part because its officials and companies are frequently targeted, from the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 to U.S.-led efforts to impede Huawei Technologies Co. Research by the Center for a New American Security, a Washington-based think tank, shows that 70 of the 765 sanction measures adopted by the Biden administration during 2021, [including reissues of Trump-era sanctions](#), had a China dimension.

"If they don't believe the sanctions are legal and legitimate, there's no incentive for them to enforce them," said Jason Bartlett, who monitors sanctions for CNAS.

While China wants to register its distaste for sanctions, Beijing also benefits when North Korea earns cash to stave off a collapse—a crisis China wouldn't want on its border—while deals with Iran and Venezuela provide China much-needed crude oil, he said.

Trading arrangements aren't the only tool Beijing has to undermine a proliferation of Western sanctions.

To challenge Western sanctions, Beijing is also baring its teeth against what it calls interference and long-arm jurisdiction. Former U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was sanctioned by Beijing last year along with think tanks and companies that China's government says interfered in its domestic affairs.

Corporate executives who deal with China await nervously a time when Beijing deploys a bevy of [new but so-far-unused regulations](#) analysts call antisancction sanction laws. The regulations give Beijing authority to punish individuals and companies for adhering to a foreign government order, such as a technology producer that halts exports to a sanctioned buyer.

Such rules could come in handy if Chinese companies get caught in the crossfire over Russian sanctions. “We’re just waiting for the moment where some foreign company...gets stuck in the middle of this sanctions antisandctions regime and is put in a place where it’s breaking either Chinese or U.S. law,” said Andrew Polk, co-founder of research firm Trivium China.

Russia and China are neighbors with nearly \$150 billion in trade, and both are led by autocratic leaders facing U.S. opposition to their governance policies. [Twenty days before Russia’s invasion](#), Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) signed a statement that blasted as “power politics...bullying, unilateral sanctions, and extraterritorial application of jurisdiction, as well as the abuse of export control policies.”

Asked about sanctions being applied to Moscow, Beijing officials have repeated their opposition.

“China and Russia will continue to conduct normal trade cooperation in the spirit of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit,” Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said. The country’s top banking regulator asserted China “will not participate in such sanctions.”

Though they don’t carry an international imprimatur like U.N. sanctions against North Korea, the scope of measures aimed at Moscow by the U.S. and Western allies is unprecedented for a major country.

The U.S. and other nations [have frozen assets](#) controlled by Mr. Putin, some of his top aides, [leading tycoons and companies](#), as well as government agencies; [blocked Russia’s biggest commercial banks](#) from the global financial system; and [forbidden trade](#) in key goods and services.

China faces a different calculus in this crisis. Russia isn’t North Korea, an economy so small and isolated that clandestine one-off shipments offer a material benefit.

Russia is a Group of 20 member and the world’s 11th biggest economy. Meaningfully dulling the pain of Western sanctions would require cooperation by banks, shippers and other business groups that in China are generally government-controlled. Each entity taking part risks being sanctioned itself.

“I predict it’ll be deeply effective, including with respect to Chinese companies,” said Ryan Fayhee, a partner at Washington law firm Hughes Hubbard & Reed LLP and a former sanctions expert at the Justice Department. Even if individual Chinese players may be willing to forge workarounds to the restrictions on Russia, Mr. Fayhee said it isn’t clear their bankers, insurers, shippers and other counterparties would go along.

“It’s very difficult to do business alone,” he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Russia demands threaten Iran nuclear deal
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-nuclear-deal-threatened-by-russian-demands-over-ukraine-sanctions-11646487044?mod=hp_lead_pos2
GIST	<p>Fresh demands from Russia threatened to derail talks to restore the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, as Moscow said it wanted written guarantees that Ukraine-related sanctions won’t prevent it from trading broadly with Tehran under a revived pact.</p> <p>The demands, made by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Saturday, came as Western and Iranian officials said they were near to reaching a deal to restore the nuclear pact, which lifted most international sanctions on Iran in exchange for tight but temporary restrictions on Tehran’s nuclear programs.</p> <p>The U.S. left the agreement in May 2018, and Iran has since mid-2019 massively expanded its nuclear work. The Vienna talks focus on the exact steps that Tehran and Washington would need to take to return into compliance with the deal.</p>

Western officials said they wanted a deal on the nuclear file in place this week. Chief negotiators from European powers left Vienna to return to their capitals Friday as they waited for Iran and the U.S. to try to solve the final differences between them. These included precisely which sanctions Washington would lift.

“We are close,” Britain’s chief negotiator at the talks, Stephanie Al-Qaq, said Friday before she left.

Advances in Iran’s nuclear work mean Western officials have warned that it could very soon be impossible to restore the 2015 nuclear deal because it would no longer be possible to re-create the central benefit for the U.S. and Europe of that agreement—keeping Iran months away from being able to amass enough nuclear fuel for one nuclear weapon.

A confidential report from the United Nations atomic agency circulated Thursday showed that Iran had now produced 33.2 kilograms of highly enriched uranium, around three-quarters of what it would need to have enough weapon-grade 90% fuel for a nuclear weapon. Experts say it would take Iran just a few weeks to amass enough weapons grade nuclear fuel.

It was always understood by Western officials that Russia’s specific role within the 2015 nuclear deal would need to be protected from sanctions. That includes receiving enriched uranium from Iran and exchanging it for yellowcake, Russia’s work to turn Iran’s Fordow nuclear facility into a research center and other nuclear-specific deliveries to Tehran’s facilities.

However, Mr. Lavrov appeared to demand far more sweeping guarantees that could introduce major loopholes in the tight financial, economic and energy sanctions the West has imposed in recent days because of [Russia’s invasion of Ukraine](#).

“We have asked for a written guarantee...that the current process triggered by the United States does not in any way damage our right to free and full trade, economic and investment cooperation and military-technical cooperation with the Islamic State,” Mr. Lavrov said.

Soon after Mr. Lavrov’s comments, Russia’s chief negotiator at the nuclear talks, Mikhail Ulyanov, tweeted that he had raised questions that needed tackling with a senior European official “to ensure smooth civil nuclear cooperation with Iran.” That suggested Russia’s real demands at the talks were narrower than Mr. Lavrov had suggested.

A Western diplomat said that if the guarantees are purely about the work Russia would do in Iran under a restored nuclear deal, “that can be managed.”

“But if Lavrov is using this as a play to try to carve a huge hole out of the overall Ukraine sanctions, that’s a different story,” the person said.

An Iranian official said his delegation was awaiting clarification from Moscow.

Either way, the Russian demands now look set to kick talks into next week, two Western diplomats said.

“In my view, a deal is still more likely than not. Critically, both Washington and Tehran want to get this done,” said Henry Rome, a director covering global macro politics and Iran at Eurasia Group. “Russia throwing sand in the gears may actually bring these two adversaries together to reach creative solutions to get the deal signed.”

Since talks began last April, Iran has refused to negotiate directly with the U.S. Instead, the other parties to the agreement—Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China and the European Union—have served as intermediaries.

	<p>Russia had played a generally constructive role in the talks, Western diplomats have said, at times pulling Iran back from unreasonable demands and pressing Tehran—publicly at times—not to drag the talks out too long.</p> <p>However, senior Western officials said that over the last few days, with the Ukraine conflict in the background, Russian officials at the talks had been more hesitant, telling their counterparts they needed to check new ideas with Moscow.</p> <p>While the talks in Vienna appeared to stall again, one potential hurdle to reviving the nuclear deal might have been removed Saturday following a trip to Tehran by Rafael Grossi, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency.</p> <p>Mr. Grossi went to Tehran to seek an agreement about the handling of a probe the agency has been doing for three years now into undeclared nuclear material found in Iran. Tehran has been stalling on the investigation and had pushed in Vienna for the files to be closed as part of restoring the nuclear deal, something the agency and Western officials refused.</p> <p>“So this is why it’s important to have this understanding between us today, which is an understanding to work together, to work very intensely,” Mr. Grossi said at a press conference in Tehran.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Russia civil aviation isolation grows
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-aviation-isolation-grows-as-planes-stay-put-11646505861
GIST	<p>London—Russian flag carrier Aeroflot Saturday said it would halt flights abroad as the country’s aviation authority placed limits on what planes could head outside its borders, increasing Russia's isolation from the global air transport system.</p> <p>Aeroflot-Russian Airlines PJSC said it is suspending almost all international flights in response to government instructions. The carrier said it would maintain flights to Minsk, the capital of neighboring Belarus that has kept close ties to Russia throughout the conflict and has been used as a staging base for Russian troops. About a quarter of the airline’s 3.5 million passengers in January were on international flights.</p> <p>The action by Russia’s largest airline came shortly after the country’s federal air transport agency, Rosaviatsiya, issued a directive that effectively blocks more than half of the aircraft in Russian fleets from flying on most international routes. It is scheduled to take effect on Sunday.</p> <p>The measure removes a large part of what international flights Russian airlines could still service after Western countries blocked their airspace to these carriers in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>“This recommendation is due to the high risk of detention or seizure of Russian airlines’ aircraft abroad,” Rosaviatsiya said. Domestic flights will continue without restrictions.</p> <p>The government’s action doesn’t affect Russian airlines that operate foreign- or Russian-registered aircraft to locations where there is no risk of them being impounded, the agency said. Domestic flights are unaffected.</p> <p>Russia’s second-largest carrier, S7 Airlines, on Friday already said it would halt all international flights as of March 5.</p> <p>Airlines are dealing with the fallout from sanctions that have largely cut off Russia from the global financial system and steps more directly targeting the country’s aviation sector. The European Union has given plane-leasing companies until March 28 to void contracts with Russian airlines. That is causing firms, including the world’s biggest lessor, AerCap Holdings NV, to void agreements with Russian operators.</p>

Russia's fleet of commercial planes relies heavily on leasing arrangements. Russian operators rent 515 aircraft from foreign leasing companies that are affected by the sanctions, out of 861 planes in service, according to aviation data specialist Cirium. The Russian government agency's edict increases fears by some lessors and insurers that efforts to repossess planes would become even more challenging.

At least some leasing firms had expected Russia to take steps to keep planes and sought to pre-empt it by trying to repossess them quickly, according to senior industry executives. There have been only a handful of successful attempts at reclaiming property. One example is a Boeing Co. 737-800 aircraft, a predecessor model to the MAX, operated by Aeroflot's discount unit, Pobeda. The plane was seized last weekend while at an Istanbul airport after the jet's owner tracked the aircraft's movements and was able to convince authorities in the country to halt the jet from taking off, according to a person familiar with the repossession.

The financial burden from Russian carriers not returning their planes is principally expected to fall on insurers for the leasing companies, who are likely to face payouts for the full value of the aircraft, according to Phil Seymour, president of aviation consulting firm, IBA Group. The market value of foreign-leased aircraft currently flown by Russian airlines amounts to about \$12 billion, according to an analysis by London-based aviation advisory firm, Ishka.

Russia's aviation sector has faced intense turmoil in response to the country's military assault on its neighbor. In addition to airspace bans issued by the U.S., EU, Canada, and others, aircraft manufacturers and maintenance firms have been barred from supplying new aircraft and spare parts needed to keep the current fleet flying.

Companies, including Texas-based [Sabre Corp.](#) and Spain's [Amadeus IT Group SA](#), which provide the systems used for distributing fares to the public and travel agencies, have said that they will withdraw support for Aeroflot on their systems. The EU and U.K. [have instructed insurance companies](#) to withdraw coverage of Russian airlines. Some insurers have already given clients notice they are canceling their policies that are required to fly under international regulations.

"Due to the unfriendly decisions of a number of foreign governments regarding the civil aviation of the Russian Federation, Russian airlines and passengers have become an instrument and hostages of a political struggle," Rosaviatsiya said in its statement.

The limits on Russian airlines flying abroad leaves Russians with few flight options. Airlines from countries such as the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Qatar and Serbia are among the few still regularly serving Russian destinations.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 US: Moscow faltering, Ukraine 'can win'
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/05/ukraine-claims-battlefield-successes-as-mariupol-evacuation-falls-apart-russia
GIST	<p>The image is one of the most evocative of the war so far. Ukrainian self-defence forces surround a man in a blue uniform. His T-shirt is bloody. The captive is a Russian pilot. His plane was shot down on Saturday while on a bombing mission in Chernihiv, north of Kyiv. He catapulted to safety and was taken prisoner. His co-pilot perished.</p> <p>Ten days after Vladimir Putin's invasion, Ukraine continues to fight back. The country's armed forces claimed to have shot down two Russian warplanes on Saturday, with a second fighter downed in the south of the country. It was on a reconnaissance mission when it crashed. Its two pilots survived and were interrogated in a muddy field.</p> <p>The crew on board a Russian military helicopter were less fortunate. Video shows a missile hitting the transport. It crashes seconds later in a ball of fire. Meanwhile, in the Kharkiv region Ukrainian troops</p>

staged a counterattack, seizing Russian weapons and armoured vehicles. These were immediately redeployed in the existential fight against Moscow.

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

Putin's war plan assumed a quick and decisive victory over Ukraine's inferior army. Tanks would roll in from the north and Belarus, as well as the south and Crimea. They would crush any resistance. Meanwhile, paratroopers would secure strategic aerodromes before dropping into Kyiv and decapitating its government, the crowning moment in what Putin called a "special operation".

Most Ukrainians would adjust to these new realities, it was thought. A pro-Russian puppet government would be installed. Those who continued to resist would face condign punishment – imprisonment, arrest and execution.

Russia's military machine has succeeded in seizing much of south-eastern and southern Ukraine, including the city of Kherson and its surrounding province. But it has failed to pacify the locals. Residents flooded Kherson's main square on Saturday, seemingly unafraid of being shot, and [protested peacefully and noisily against occupation](#).

They waved Ukrainian flags and even hijacked a Russian armoured personnel carrier, taking it for a spin to loud applause. Similar large-scale anti-Russian demonstrations took place [in Melitopol](#), where Russian soldiers fired into the air, and the Azov seaport of Berdyansk.

It was too early to say whether Putin's ambitious plan to conquer Ukraine is grinding towards failure. But there is no doubt Ukraine's continued ability to fight back has defied his apparent assumption of a swift and largely unopposed Russian victory.

Speaking to the BBC, the US secretary of state [Antony Blinken](#) reinforced the message Moscow's campaign was faltering and said Ukraine "can absolutely win against Russia". He observed: "The war has already not gone as Russian president Vladimir Putin might have planned."

US officials point to the fact that Ukrainian aircraft are still operational this weekend, together with some air defence units. It is a scenario most had believed unlikely when Moscow's so-called "special operation" began last week. Russia has forbidden the word war and made its use a criminal offence.

"The Ukrainians still have a significant majority of their air combat power available to them, both fixed-wing and rotary wing as well as unmanned systems and surface-to-air systems," a US official told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

With its land invasion apparently stalled, and with little progress made in the advance of a Russian super-column towards Kyiv, Moscow is increasingly turning to indiscriminate shelling and bombing of civilians. The objective, Kyiv believes, is to spread panic and terror.

Multiple cities were hit on Saturday. They included Bila Tserkva, south of the capital, and Kharkiv, where residents spent another night in underground shelters and metro stations. There was fierce fighting in Bucha, just north-west of Kyiv, with reports of civilian casualties.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, says Moscow's "terror tactics" were designed to force capitulation. In a video address on Friday night, he berated Nato members for failing to enforce a no-fly zone over the country, saying it gave a "green light for further bombing of Ukrainian cities and villages".

Meanwhile, a desperate humanitarian disaster was taking place in Mariupol. An apparent agreement to evacuate 200,000 people from the port city fell apart because of what Kyiv said was continuous Russian shelling. About 500 people managed to exit from the nearby town of Volnovakha.

At least 200,000 people remained trapped in Mariupol on Saturday without heat, electricity and water. “Everything has been hit. Apartment blocks, shops, the hospital. It’s like world war two,” Anatoliy Lozar, a volunteer defender, told the Observer. He added: “We won’t give up. We will fight to the very last man.”

Lozar said civilians were paying a terrible price for Russian aggression. “I saw a car pull up outside a hospital and a mother run out with a wounded child. I have no idea whether the child lived or died. We can’t even collect our dead. The morgue has no electricity.” Médecins Sans Frontières said medicines had run out, with locals drinking snow and rainwater.

The city’s mayor Vadym Boychenko said supplies of food were critically low. “They want to wipe Mariupol and Mariupol residents off the face of the earth,” the mayor said, describing indiscriminate shelling of residential areas and hospitals.

These attacks seem borne not of a grand strategy but of increasing frustration in Moscow at the progress of the war. Andrei Soldatov, an expert on Russia’s security services, said Russia’s military did not seem to be fully in control. “You have the political element dominating decision-making,” he told the Observer.

Others pointed to outdated hardware. “Russian has a 20th-century army. Ukraine is using 21st-century weapons,” Olena Chebeluik, a historian in Lviv, said. She added: “We are fighting in small mobile groups. Our fighters can hide. They know the territory. Locals support them.”

The Ukrainian offensive in the Kharkiv region was possible because of “low morale” and a lack of preparation among Russian reserves, Ukraine’s armed forces said. Some separatist units had also pulled back to the Donetsk and Luhansk regions after Ukrainian units seized the town of Horlivka.

Ukraine’s military claims 10,000 Russian soldiers have been killed. Moscow puts the figure at 500. On Saturday the defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, said 66,224 Ukrainians living abroad had returned home to fight – the equivalent of 12 brigades. “Ukrainians, we are invincible!” he said.

Outside Lviv’s main recruitment office, instructor Vitaly Glyuk said Ukraine had taken the initiative against a more powerful opponent. “The Russians are getting a bit exhausted and now we are going forward. It’s our time,” he said. He added: “We have been fighting this monster for 300 years already.” Optimistically, Glyuk talked about recapturing Crimea, eight years after Putin annexed the Black Sea peninsula.

“Once we have won back our territory in the south we will get Crimea as well,” he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 UK: steep rise people w/long-term illness
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/society/2022/mar/05/covid-pandemic-sparks-steep-rise-in-number-of-people-in-uk-with-long-term-illness
GIST	<p>More than a third of working-age people in the UK now suffer from a long-term illness, with new figures showing a dramatic rise since the pandemic began. Post-Covid conditions, including long Covid, breathing difficulties and mental-health problems, are among the causes, according to disability charities and health campaigners.</p> <p>An <i>Observer</i> analysis of the Office for National Statistics’ (ONS) labour market status of disabled people figures shows that nearly 14.2 million people in the UK aged 16 to 64 said they had a health condition lasting for at least 12 months in 2021 – a rise of 1.2 million during the two years of the pandemic.</p> <p>Levels of long-term ill-health had been rising more slowly before the emergence of Covid, at an annual average of about 275,000 cases a year between 2014 and 2018, but the rapid increase over the last two years highlights the health problems facing the UK, says the disability charity Scope.</p>

About 800,000 more people suffered from mental-health problems in 2020-21 than did so in 2018-19, Scope said, and the number of people with chest and breathing problems had grown by about 570,000 over the same period.

James Taylor, Scope's director of strategy, said: "These figures show the ongoing shock waves of the past two years continue to affect lives today. We're concerned things will continue to get worse as time goes on.

" These figures could mean more people living with the extra costs that [come with disability](#). As the cost of living crisis continues to bite, we know that disabled people are twice as likely to live in a cold house and three times as likely to not have been able to afford food. "The government needs to get a grip on the cost of living crisis, and target financial support directly at disabled people."

Long Covid is another factor. The latest ONS long Covid report estimates that 1.5 million have had Covid symptoms for more than four weeks, and 685,000 people had symptoms that had lasted more than a year.

Further analysis by Long Covid Kids shows that people with pre-existing conditions are more likely to suffer long Covid than those without. Those whose activity is limited are, on average, more than three times as likely to suffer long Covid as those with no pre-existing conditions.

Dr Susannah Thompson was infected in April 2020 while working as a GP in her local hospital's urgent care centre in north-west England. She made a "slow, gradual recovery" over the next months and was involved in setting up the GP-led vaccination programme until she had a "massive relapse" in January 2021.

"I ended up in hospital, rushed into resus [resuscitation]," she said. "I struggled to even hold a pen to write my name." She has had constant leg pain, chilblains, brain fog – and even sitting up can send her heart racing to 140 beats per minute. "Since then I haven't been able to see a patient," she said. "I've always been active – I was a cold-water sea swimmer. I went from being able to throw myself in the sea twice a week to struggling to get in and out of a bath."

She now uses an electric wheelchair to take her children to school and is on sick leave from her roles as GP and medical director.

"It feels like we're ignoring long Covid," Thompson said. "People in the middle of their lives are getting robbed of their livelihoods, at risk of losing their homes. I can't fathom why we don't try to prevent it. But we're not."

Ondine Sherwood, co-founder of Long Covid SoS, said: "We don't yet have data on how many infected during the huge Omicron wave will go on to experience prolonged symptoms, so [numbers] will almost certainly grow. Many, if not most of those with long Covid, are of working age and were previously fit and healthy – there is surely going to be a major effect on the workforce."

She pointed to [a study published in Nature last month](#), which shows that even a mild infection can increase the risk of heart disease for a year after diagnosis. "Given the huge numbers affected, both in the UK and worldwide, there is a real danger that the 'average' level of health people enjoy could already be lower and will deteriorate further."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Las Vegas: record growth, heat, drought
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/04/las-vegas-population-growth-climate-crisis
GIST	Away from the lights and fountains of the Las Vegas Strip, bulldozers are working overtime as the suburbs of Sin City are bursting out of their seams.

Las Vegas is growing at a staggering rate. Clark county, where the city is located, is home to roughly 2.3 million people, but forecasts predict the [population could go beyond 4 million by 2055](#).

Attracted by the lure of cheaper costs of living, lower taxes, and newly built homes, more than half a million people are expected to flock to southern [Nevada](#) in just the next 15 years. To accommodate them, the region's arid landscape is being converted into strip malls and shopping centers as winding cul de sacs creep closer to the rocky hillsides.

But balancing growth and climate change has posed a formidable challenge.

Last year temperatures [hit](#) 116F (46.6C) in June, setting a new record [for such dangerously hot weather so early in the year](#). Concrete cooked during the day, spitting out heat long after the sun set. Thousands of unhoused residents, outdoor workers and communities that couldn't afford the rising costs of air conditioning bore the brunt. By July, 12 people lost their lives to the heat. In 2020, the Clark county coroner [counted 124 heat-related deaths](#).

It's only going to get worse. The city is [warming faster than anywhere else](#) in the US. And the future will get hotter, drier and more turbulent, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a consortium of climate scientists from around the world, [warned](#) in its most recent report.

The county is also grappling with a quickly waning water supply and intense air pollution that's affecting the most vulnerable. The issues are exacerbated by heat, which will be driven higher by both the climate crisis and the building boom. Temperatures are going to keep climbing - and people are going to keep coming.

Instead of curbing growth, the city known for excess is betting that it can conserve its way out of a climate catastrophe. Las Vegas leaders are making promises and setting ambitious sustainability goals.

"We are one of the best-kept secrets in the world when it comes to sustainability," said Jace Radke, a senior public information officer with the city of Las Vegas, listing off achievements. Already, the city has added 450 miles of bike lanes, switched 52,000 streetlights to LED lighting, and public buildings, parks, and traffic lights are powered by renewable energy, Radke said.

Clark county, which [adopted a new sustainability and climate action plan](#) in 2021, aims to reduce emissions 100% by 2050. And, though water levels have drastically declined - and are expected to keep dropping - the region predominantly relies on recycling. Most indoor drains in southern Nevada filter directly back into the reservoir.

The sustainability work has had a positive impact, but there's still a long way to go.

In 2019, Clark county [generated more greenhouse gas emissions than the city of Los Angeles](#) - which is home to roughly 1.7 million more people - according to a new report issued by the county in February. Nearly half of the county's emissions are from energy used to power buildings and industry. The next biggest share at 37% was attributed to transportation. Both of these sectors are slated to increase as more homes and businesses are built and rising numbers of residents hit the roads. The construction equipment itself is expected to [add to emissions as the county continues to grow](#).

Las Vegas [ranks 12th in a list of the most polluted cities](#) in the US for ozone, according to the American Lung Association. Residents - especially those in the hottest corners of the county - are already feeling the effects.

In Cinthia Moore's East Las Vegas home, two air purifiers hum throughout the day. Still, the single mom said, her son struggles with breathing problems and rashes when the air is at its worst. Since moving to the area, she has also gotten more migraines and allergy symptoms that won't subside.

The community, [which has a 15% poverty-rate and where 25% of the population are immigrants](#), is far hotter than its neighbors, with fewer trees to ease punishing summer temperatures. The neighborhood's older homes are less equipped to offer residents relief and renters, the majority of those who live there, are unable to add upgrades. Many residents can't afford to run their air conditioning as energy bills and rising rents have consumed increasingly larger portions of their incomes, Moore said.

Meanwhile, the slow churn of congestion on two major highways within a mile and a half of Moore's home continues to spew pollutants. "There is a lot of traffic and cars are just sitting there," she said. Commuters creep in and out of the city on the weekdays, and on Sundays scores of tourists idle in their cars in a crawling escape from Las Vegas. "There are folks who are living right there and it's going into their homes and they are experiencing pollution every day."

If the air and the weather continue to worsen, she's not sure how people will cope. "I always talk about leaving but it's not that easy to just get up and move," Moore said, noting the rising costs of living elsewhere. But more than that, she'd be leaving her support system, she said. "As a single mom it is hard. That's why I stay here and fight for climate action."

Moore works as a real estate agent and has seen the housing crunch first-hand. But she is also coordinator for the Nevada Environmental Justice Coalition, a network of advocacy organizations pushing for sustainability. She and others have called on the county to more urgently address both pressing issues, which disproportionately affect people of color and the most vulnerable communities.

For Marci Henson, the director of Clark county's department of environment & sustainability, a controversial land bill, which would open up tens of thousands of acres of pristine desert to developers, holds the key in balancing growth and a sustainable future.

The federal legislation, pushed by the county and introduced in Congress last year, would authorize the sale of more than 36,100 acres of public land now operated by the Bureau of Land Management.

Dotted with yuccas, arid landscape that stretches for miles south of Las Vegas along the I-15 corridor is being considered for a new suburb. The area is currently home to threatened desert tortoises but the bill would carve out new protected habitat for the imperiled species, part of roughly 2m acres elsewhere in the region that will be set aside as new conservation and recreation areas.

It would also be a boon to local budgets. Funds from those land sales could funnel back to Clark county and be used to achieve its ambitious climate goals.

They will need them. The proposed expansion is miles from the city and could add scores of new commuters. Dense concentrations of concrete over natural landscapes will drive up temperatures, and more air conditioners will fight to keep new buildings cool. But Henson said the county is prepared to address the issues.

"We can't say, 'We are full, you can't come here any more,'" said Henson. "We were challenged to find the balance between making more land accessible and providing a relief valve for that urban growth without undermining the quality of life and the resources here."

The biggest challenge, she said, may be water. The Colorado River Basin, which supplies 90% of the region's water, is mired in the worst drought in recorded history. Nearby, Lake Mead now features an infamous and ominous bathtub ring showcasing the 150-foot drop in water levels over the last two decades.

Facing declining supplies and an increasing consumer base, the region is working to tighten its belt. The Southern Nevada Water Authority's track record is strong - per-capita water use in the region decreased roughly 47% between 2002 and 2020 - but progress has plateaued in recent years.

Officials at the water agency say they have already taken care of the low-hanging fruit when it comes to conservation and are now stretching to get the harder-to-reach achievements. Because indoor use is almost entirely recycled, water waste is primarily attributed to older systems that cool large buildings like casinos and shopping malls, and to landscaping. Throughout the city, it's easy to spot decorative grass lining parking lots or accenting the entrances to homes and businesses.

The agency is working with the county and the business sector to prohibit thirsty cooling systems from being installed in new developments. They are also limiting what goes to golf courses which together with resorts claim 10% of the supply. Lawns that don't have recreational use are being outlawed, with plans for full eradication by 2026.

But rising heat will add new pressures on the system, driving demand up by an estimated 10 gallons per capita per day (GPCD). Usage is now at 110 GPCD but adding new homes and water-users will increase the burden. Though they are being crunched in both directions, the agency has set an ambitious goal to bring down consumption from a projected 123 GPCD, [based on models that account for higher demand due to the rising heat, outdated systems and expected growth](#), to 86 GPCD by 2035.

The agency is also looking to new sources for supply. The SNWA abandoned a controversial plan for a 300-mile pipeline that would pump in groundwater from eastern Nevada in 2020, after decades of pushback from conservationists, tribes and ranchers, [but they still own water rights in the region](#). The department is also planning to help fund a water recycling project spearheaded by the Metropolitan Water District of southern California, which would grant them some of its output when construction is completed.

Still, facing a drier future where water sources are scarce, conservation will be key.

"Implementing conservation programs successfully are the things that allow me to sleep at night," said Colby Pelligrino, the deputy general manager of water resources for the SNWA, adding that she wasn't concerned about continued sprawl. A Las Vegas native, she has watched the city grow and change, and sees the shifts as a hallmark of southern Nevada.

"When people think about Las Vegas they think about living in excess, but we have been a world-leader in water conservation for at least the last decade and a half," she said. "We have got work to do to balance our water use and our water demands."

Patrick Donnelly, a tortoise biologist and the Great Basin Director for the Center for Biological Diversity, an environmental advocacy organization, doesn't see it that way. He has been fighting the lands bill since its inception and has grave concerns about unrestricted spread in southern Nevada. The lands bill has sharply divided environmental and justice advocates who disagree about the net effects of increasing both development and conservation areas.

"The biggest issue with the Clark county lands bill is not the loss of tortoise habitat, it's not even the water, it's the climate crisis," Donnelly said, adding that it is "like hammering in the nails to our own coffin".

He doesn't think the region can conserve enough to make up for a new sprawling suburb, more cars on the roads, and more concrete in one of the hottest areas in the country. "It is perpetuating the same pattern of unsustainable development that brought us to the brink of climate collapse to begin with."

Donnelly has been pushing lawmakers to plan for growing upward instead of outward. "There's no doubt – Clark county does not have control over demographic shifts," he said. "But they are talking about Las Vegas metastasizing like a tumorous growth outside the valley. The idea that all those people need single-family residences to move into? That is wrong."

	<p>Ultimately though, people will continue to come and their future in the desert may be a precarious one. Those seeking more affordable options run the risk of getting stuck when the landscape becomes even less livable.</p> <p>“There’s a gallows humor when you live here, like, ‘Ha ha, one day this place is going to be uninhabitable,’” Donnelly said. “It is a dark joke but actually it is true. One day this place will be uninhabitable. And the question I pose when people say that is, ‘Who gets to leave?’”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Fortress Kyiv prepares for Russia attack
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/05/fortress-kyiv-ukraine-grimly-anticipates-russia-advance
GIST	<p>An army crane pulls concrete breeze blocks into the middle of the road. A group of youths empty shovel-loads of sand into sacks to make sandbags. Middle-aged men leave their families for long shifts out in the cold.</p> <p>Over the past week, these makeshift armed positions have sprung up with increasing speed on both major and minor roads on the routes into Kyiv.</p> <p>The Ukrainian capital is now a fortress, at least partly defended by a volunteer army of local people.</p> <p>After the first few days of shock when Putin’s war began, an overwhelming effort is now under way to prepare as best as possible for a potential Russian drive to the heart of the Ukrainian state. Emptied of many civilians and fortified with these amateur barricades, Kyiv waits for the Russians.</p> <p>“We understand that these posts won’t stop a tank, but they are about finding Russian saboteurs and preserving order,” said a 58-year-old army chaplain, who is running the defence preparations for an area on the outskirts of Kyiv. He sat in a boxy office in a local administration building dressed in khaki fatigues, his Kalashnikov leaning against the radiator.</p> <p>He had plotted out the location of checkpoints in his small district to create a network of defences that, he hoped, would be impossible to circumvent. Local officials contacted teachers and managers to do cursory checks on those volunteering to receive a gun and guard the posts.</p> <p>“We work with them, we train them – almost everyone is local. Everyone knows each other. If we hear that someone is not very reliable, then we give them a task without weapons,” he said.</p> <p>Along the highway from the south to Kyiv, the only route into the capital that for now remains relatively safe, billboards displaying stock images of happy families advertising new apartments or holiday destinations appear like messages from a parallel universe. Others have been hastily replaced with posters bearing the words: “Russian ship, f*** off!”</p> <p>These were the words allegedly spoken by the defenders of Snake Island in the Black Sea to a Russian ship that threatened to open fire if they did not surrender. Initial reports that all the defenders had been killed were later denied, and the audio exchange has not been verified, but the encounter had already attained legendary status and the phrase has become the unofficial slogan of Ukraine’s war effort.</p> <p>Other messages on huge digital displays in central Kyiv are more subtle, asking Russian soldiers if they want to die for Putin’s oligarchs, or imploring them to return home with a clean conscience.</p> <p>Whether or not any Russian soldiers will make it into Kyiv in the coming days to see them remains questionable. The Polish ambassador, Bartosz Cichocki, the last remaining EU ambassador in Kyiv, described the city as “uninvadable and unconquerable” in a meeting this week inside his embassy, where he has hunkered down with whisky, cigarettes and a flak jacket.</p>

But after the initial attempts to seize the capital speedily, there are now fears that Russia may do what it has done in cities such as Kharkiv and Chernihiv and bring in airstrikes against civilian targets.

Kyiv, which just a fortnight ago was a bustling European metropolis, is now eerily deserted. The only sounds in the centre are the ringing of church bells and the wail of the air raid sirens, which sound a few times a day. Occasionally, a police car or military vehicle speeds past, daubed with yellow paint or marked with yellow tape, the mark of Ukrainian forces.

In contrast to the silent streets, the train station is a maelstrom of chaotic activity. Inside the cavernous central hall, a grand Soviet structure filled with mosaics, mirrors and two multi-tiered chandeliers, a crush of people waited to get to the platforms.

The Ukrainian rail service has evacuated more than a million people since the war began, and for trains going west, no tickets are required, just patience and sharp elbows. Women and children have top priority, then pensioners. Trains heading eastwards depart mostly empty, while those arriving from in the other direction are mobbed by crowds as soon as they pull into the platform.

“Look at what they did in Kharkiv. Nothing will stop them doing that here,” said Polina, a student trying to get out of Kyiv to resume her studies in Vienna. Tuesday, the day after the first images of destruction in Kharkiv appeared on television, was the start of the crush, as people began to see the “Aleppo option” as a real possibility for Kyiv.

While there has been fierce fighting on the western edges of the city, the centre has not seen heavy bombardments this week, except for a strike against the television tower that killed five people. But this grim anticipation is its own kind of torture.

At one metro station in the suburbs on Thursday, there were about 100 people spread out across the platform and sprawled on benches in the open carriages of a train parked in the station, hiding from possible airstrikes.

Some had plastic containers of food, folding furniture and mattresses, while others slept on the cold floor with just a blanket and pillow.

Lying on a bench with half a toilet roll, a cup of strong tea and a hunk of bread, 54-year-old Ivan had been inside the station for eight days. He had travelled into Kyiv on 22 February from his home town of Ivankiv, to work a 48-hour shift in his construction job. By the time his shift was over, Russia had invaded and there was fighting in his home town and along the route. Since then, he has been sleeping in the metro, eating food delivered by volunteers, unable to get home to his wife and young daughter.

“It’s a completely impossible situation. When my daughter was born, I was 49 and my wife was 42. We didn’t expect to have a child, but God gave us one. And now she’s a child of war, and I can’t be there,” he said.

In the new reality, some are trying hard to keep some remnants of their old lives functioning. Andriy Hrushchinskyy of Kyivspetstrans, the company responsible for collecting roughly 70% of the city’s household waste, said 14 out of his 30 refuse trucks were out on the roads, even though many workers had left their jobs and gone to fight.

“I have a gun and I’m itching to pick it up and go to fight, but I realise if I don’t do this work, nobody else will, and I’m trying to persuade my guys that they should also stay,” he said in an interview during a brief walk outside the coordination centre from where many of the city’s key services are now run. He said it was important for those left behind in the city to see that services were functioning, as it was a reassuring sign that life goes on.

Handing out weapons to tens of thousands of people, many of whom have had little training, has led to some problematic situations. With reports of Russian saboteur groups – diversanty – at work in and around the city, tension is high and everyone is a potential source of suspicion.

At one checkpoint outside Kyiv earlier in the week, a man could be seen tied up at the side of the road. Amid persistent rumours that Russian diversanty may in certain cases be disguised as foreign journalists, some nervous residents have taken to calling in sightings of journalists to police. There are many reports of friendly fire incidents.

One man from the southern Russian republic of Dagestan, who has lived in Kyiv since 2015 and is volunteering with a Ukrainian territorial defence unit, said he was no longer able to go outside without his comrades, because of suspicions he could be one of the Chechen assassin groups reportedly sent into Ukraine by Ramzan Kadyrov, Chechnya's Kremlin-backed leader.

The man, who did not want to give his name, said the one time he had gone out alone since the start of the war, he was immediately arrested, had a bag put over his head and was driven away for questioning as a suspected diversant, before his commander was called in to vouch that he was fighting on the Ukrainian side.

“Now, my job is that if they catch any suspicious Chechens, I get sent there to question them and work out if they're Kadyrov's guys or not,” he said.

There is a reason for the fear and paranoia: few doubt that Russia really has sent diversionary groups into Ukraine, and there are persistent rumours of a plot to assassinate the president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy.

Zelenskiy's insistence on remaining in Kyiv has amazed foreign diplomats, while his rousing speeches and exhausted but defiant countenance have inspired many Ukrainians over the past 10 days. In the government quarter in the centre of Kyiv, the defence of Zelenskiy is being overseen by a mixture of the army, the national guard, special forces and territorial defence units.

The commander of the territorial defence unit based in a building near the presidential administration is 58-year-old Yevgeny Ptashnik. He said this was his third war, after Afghanistan in the 1980s and east Ukraine in 2014. He volunteered on the first day. He said the current Ukrainian struggle reminded him of the fight of the determined Afghans against the powerful but unmotivated Soviet army.

“However much we criticise Russians, they still have human feelings, they come here and see that old people and women come out to the streets, and they will be scared,” he said, speaking over a series of booms in the distance.

“And unlike the Afghans, we also have a lot of modern weapons, thanks to Europe and America.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 'Desperate plea': send aid, military planes
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/05/ukraine-us-congress-zelenskiy-video-call
GIST	<p>Volodymyr Zelenskiy, the president of Ukraine, urged US lawmakers to help provide aircraft to defend the country against Russian invasion during a video meeting with members of Congress on Saturday.</p> <p>Chuck Schumer, the Senate majority leader, said Zelenskiy “made a desperate plea” for the military aid, which would include planes, drones and anti-aircraft missiles. The Ukrainian president praised sanctions placed upon Russia during the meeting but pressed US lawmakers to go further by banning oil imports from Moscow.</p> <p>“These planes are very much needed,” Schumer, a Democrat, said in a statement following the gathering of more than 280 senators and House of Representative members. “And I will do all I can to help the administration to facilitate their transfer.”</p>

On Friday, Zelenskiy criticized Nato for not imposing a no-fly zone above [Ukraine](#). “All the people who die from this day forward will also die because of you,” he warned in a speech. Nato has said sending jets to shoot down Russian planes would risk a severe escalation in the conflict.

Russian-made fighter jets familiar to Ukrainian pilots may be sent to the beleaguered country, however, possibly via US allies in Europe. Congress is working on a bipartisan \$10bn package of humanitarian and security aid that could facilitate this.

Schumer, cited by a source briefed on the call, said Democrats and Republicans were “working very hard” toward passing the relief package, AFP reported.

“We will get that assistance of over \$10bn in economic, humanitarian and security assistance to the Ukrainian people quickly,” he said. The bipartisan effort was underlined by the Republican senator Steve Daines, who told Fox News after the call that lawmakers were “unified in our support for Ukraine”.

Republican senators, including Marco Rubio and Lindsey Graham, tweeted their support for Zelenskiy and further measures against Russia following the meeting. Rick Scott, another Republican, said the US should target Russia and Belarus by taking “every action to destroy their economies”.

Later on Saturday the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, met with the Ukrainian foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, at the Ukraine-Poland border and America’s top diplomat briefly crossed into Ukraine with his counterpart. “The entire world stands with Ukraine, just as I am standing here in Ukraine with my friend, my colleague,” Blinken said.

Kuleba said: “I hope the people of Ukraine will be able to see this as a clear manifestation that we have friends who literally stand by us.”

The meeting took place amid worsening US-Russian relations, with the state department calling on Americans living or traveling in Russia to “depart immediately” and warning that they face “potential harassment”.

Also on Saturday it emerged that Brittney Griner, one of America’s most decorated female basketball players, had been detained last month by Russia’s federal customs service authorities after the discovery of vape cartridges said to have contained hashish oil in her luggage at an airport near Moscow.

In Ukraine, Russian forces are attempting to shell and encircle the cities of Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Chernihiv and Sumy, with numerous reports of civilian areas being hit. Odesa, Ukraine’s largest port city, is under repeated attack from Russian ships, according to Ukrainian officials.

Vladimir Putin, Russia’s president, has refused to call off the invasion in face of sanctions that are withering the Russian economy, instead moving to shut down Facebook and Twitter access in the country in an attempt to quell internal dissent.

Putin also warned against any Nato-imposed no-fly zone. “That very second, we will view them as participants of the military conflict, and it would not matter what members they are,” he said.

The United Nations has warned of a growing humanitarian crisis within Ukraine, with the UN’s World Food Programme saying that millions of people require food aid “immediately”. An estimated 1.4 million people have fled Ukraine to neighboring countries.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Tens of thousands rally for Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/06/tens-of-thousands-join-rallies-around-the-world-in-support-of-ukraine

GIST

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in cities including Santiago, Vancouver Paris and New York in support of [Ukraine](#), demanding an end to Russia's invasion.

The protesters rallied on Saturday against Russian president Vladimir Putin's attack, which began on 24 February and appeared to be [entering a new phase](#) with escalating bombardment.

About 41,600 people demonstrated in 119 protests in towns and cities across [France](#), according to interior ministry estimates. In Paris itself, 16,000 gathered at Place de la Bastille.

"Despite the suffering, we are going to win, we are sure of it," said Nataliya, a Franco-Ukrainian with the blue-and-yellow Ukrainian flag draped over shoulders, at the Paris protest.

She declined to give her full name because of concerns about the safety of her son in Ukraine. "We are proud of their courage, their determination," she added.

"We will be here every weekend, in Paris or elsewhere, until Putin leaves, withdraws his tanks," said Aline Le Bail-Kremer, a member of Stand With Ukraine, one of the organisers of the protest.

One of the largest rallies to demand the withdrawal of Russia's troops from Ukraine on the invasion's 10th day was in Zurich, where organisers believed 40,000 people took part, Switzerland's ATS news agency reported.

Demonstrators in the largest Swiss city called for "peace now", while others carried signs saying, Stop War, while others said Peace.

Hundreds also turned out in London, including Ukrainians whose families were forced to flee Russian bombs.

"We need to keep on reminding everyone, we need to stay united to support our country," said Olena Marcyniuk, 36, at a protest in central London's Trafalgar Square with her children aged 14 months and nine years.

"Maybe somehow (we can) get through to Russia as well that the world is for Ukraine and that it needs to start acting to stop the war."

Much of her family had fled, but her uncle stayed in Kyiv to "fight for the city", she said.

In the centre of Rome, unions and organisations rallied in a large "procession of peace", demonstrating against Putin but also Nato.

"No base, no soldier, Italy out of Nato," chanted pacifists preceded by a large flag in the colours of the rainbow.

"This is perhaps one of the first real demonstrations for peace," Italian cartoonist, actor and writer Vauro Senesi said .

"Here no one believes we make peace with arms, that we make it by sending arms to one of the parties (Ukraine)."

More than a thousand people also demonstrated in the Croatian capital Zagreb with banners saying: Stop the War, Save Europe and Glory to Ukraine.

In the Balkans, the invasion has revived dark memories of the bloody break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, which killed more than 100,000 people during a series of conflicts.

Across the Atlantic Ocean, several thousand people gathered in New York's Times Square.

	<p>They carried sunflowers, Ukraine's national flower, and signs calling to, Stop Russian terrorism.</p> <p>At a podium, several speakers echoed Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy's call for a no-fly zone over Ukraine, which Nato has so far resisted for fear of triggering a direct conflict with Russia.</p> <p>Hundreds also gathered outside the White House in Washington to demand a Nato no-fly zone and military assistance for Ukraine.</p> <p>In Santiago, Chile, an anti-war protest broke out in front of the Russian embassy, while members of the Ukrainian community demonstrated in front of the Russian embassy in Colombia in the capital Bogotá.</p> <p>A crowd of thousands showed their support for Ukraine in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery.</p> <p>Straight after the invasion, prominent Russians went public with their opposition to the war, and more than 1,800 people were arrested at rallies across the country.</p> <p>Last weekend, hundreds of thousands also turned out in yellow and blue across Europe including in Russia, Germany, Spain, Finland and the Czech Republic.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 Day 11 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/06/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-11-of-the-russian-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The strength of Ukraine's resistance "continues to surprise' Russia," a British intelligence report has said, despite attempts by invading troops to break Ukrainian morale by targeting populated areas. • The Ukrainian military said its forces had been "fighting fierce battles to maintain certain borders" in its daily operational report. It claimed Russian troops had been "demoralised" and were in an "extremely low moral and psychological state" due to the resistance of the Ukrainian people, the general staff of the armed forces said. • US president Joe Biden spoke with Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, to discuss ongoing efforts to impose sanctions on Russia and speed up US military, humanitarian and economic assistance. The White House said during the call the pair also discussed talks between Russia and Ukraine, but offered no additional details. • Zelenskiy also spoke to SpaceX and Tesla boss Elon Musk, announcing the country will receive more of its Starlink satellite internet terminals this coming week. • US-based credit card giants Visa and Mastercard have announced they will suspend their Russian business operations. • Britain's prime minister Boris Johnson has issued a six-point plan in reaction to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and is urging other leaders to endorse it in efforts to ensure Russia fails in its apparent attempt to take over its democratic neighbour. • China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, has told the US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, that Beijing opposes any moves that "add fuel to the flames" in Ukraine. Wang called for negotiations to resolve the immediate crisis, adding that the US and Europe should pay attention to the negative impact of Nato's eastward expansion on Russia's security. Blinken said the world is acting in unison in response to Russian aggression and ensuring that Moscow will pay a high price. • Blinken briefly stepped onto Ukrainian soil for a meeting with the foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, who predicted Russia would be defeated but appealed for more military assistance. Blinken also visited a welcome centre set up by Polish authorities where about 3,000 refugees are taking shelter. • Hundreds of men have been lining up in Kyiv to join the Ukrainian army. One volunteer, Volodymyr Onysko, told Sky News: "We know why we are here. We know why we defend our country. And our guys that are actually standing there and fighting Russian military forces. We know what we are doing and that's why we will win."

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ukrainian military said Russian forces continue to focus on Kyiv while moving ahead with assaults on Kharkiv, Mykolaiv and the creation of a land corridor with Crimea, in its latest operational report. The report said aircraft from airports in Belarusian territory were involved in air strikes on military and civilian infrastructure in Kyiv and Zhytomyr. • Russia has dropped powerful bombs on residential areas of Chernihiv, a city north of Kyiv, according to a regional official. Vyacheslav Chaus posted a photo of what he said was an undetonated FAB-500, a Soviet-designed 500-kilogram (1,100-pound) air-dropped bomb of the kind usually used against military-industrial facilities and fortified structures. • The humanitarian situation in the southern Ukrainian port of Mariupol is “catastrophic” and it is vital that civilians be evacuated, a senior official from the NGO Doctors Without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières MSF) has warned. • The International Monetary Fund has announced it could approve \$1.4 billion emergency funding as early as next week as the body warns of war’s ‘severe impact’ on the global economy.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Truckers protesting Covid mandates mass
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/us/trucker-convoy-washington-protest.html
GIST	<p>One group of truckers called the People’s Convoy that left California more than a week ago made it to the East Coast and was stationed on Saturday in Hagerstown, Md., about 70 miles northwest of the capital, converging with other drivers and their supporters — opening up the possibility that the convoy could move into Washington to hold protests against pandemic restrictions in the next few days.</p> <p>It was not clear what the convoy’s exact travel plans were. A Facebook post on Saturday afternoon noted that a rally would be taking place on Saturday evening at the Hagerstown Speedway where the trucks were amassing, and several people commented that the group would be leaving on Sunday for the Capital Beltway, a highway that surrounds Washington.</p> <p>There were reports on Saturday of at least a thousand trucks, recreational vehicles and cars gathered at the racetrack. One man who described himself as the lead trucker in the group told the crowd on Friday night that he would be driving his truck into the heart of the capital.</p> <p>“D.C., the government, whomever, can claim that they have all this opposition for us waiting in D.C.,” the man said, according to Reuters. “But that flag on the back of my truck will go down to Constitution Avenue between the White House and the Washington Monument.”</p> <p>Christopher Rodriguez, director of the District of Columbia Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency, said the convoy had signaled that it was planning to stay outside the city. If the protesters did enter Washington, the authorities would be ready for them, he said.</p> <p>“We’ve been planning for this for over a month now,” Mr. Rodriguez said, adding that National Guard members were stationed around the city with personnel, equipment and heavy vehicles.</p> <p>“In the event we do see impact in the district, those personnel and equipment can help move traffic through with the support of the Metropolitan Police Department,” he said.</p> <p>The People’s Convoy was one of several groups inspired by the Canadian protests against pandemic measures that disrupted the capital of Ottawa for three weeks. The American groups said they, too, would drive to Washington to lead a nonpartisan, grassroots protest of government Covid policies, but many appeared to be aligned with far-right organizations and activists.</p> <p>Their demands have been undercut by the reality that many U.S. states have already started rolling back restrictions as virus cases and deaths have ebbed. And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued new guidance in late February suggesting that 70 percent of Americans could stop wearing masks.</p>

With the violence of Jan. 6, 2021, still fresh on the minds of many, officials [had ramped up security around the Capitol](#) in recent days ahead of President Biden's State of the Union speech on Tuesday, erecting a fence around the Capitol, dispatching National Guard troops and positioning military vehicles and police cars at strategic locations on streets near Congress.

Mr. Rodriguez confirmed that the fencing around the Capitol had since been taken down by federal authorities.

Another group called the Freedom Convoy [that quit its journey to Washington](#) last week after only five trucks remained [claimed to have a permit](#) to demonstrate at the Washington Monument on Tuesday afternoon before the president's speech. City officials said only a few protesters showed up.

A National Guard spokesman confirmed this week that approximately 700 soldiers from the District of Columbia, New Jersey, Vermont and West Virginia National Guards were in the city and that their mission was scheduled to end at midnight on Monday.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 NKorea confirms new tests on spy satellite
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/north-korea-confirms-new-tests-on-spy-satellite/
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea performed data transmission and other key tests needed to develop a spy satellite, state media said Sunday, in the second such tests in about a week, indicating the country intends to conduct a prohibited long-range rocket launch soon.</p> <p>The moves come as North Korea has been carrying out a spate of ballistic missile launches – including one detected by its neighbors on Saturday – in what experts call an attempt to add new weapons systems to its arsenal and pressure the United States into making concessions amid stalled diplomacy.</p> <p>On Sunday, the North's Korean Central News Agency said it conducted “another important test” the previous day under its plan to develop a reconnaissance satellite. It said authorities tested the satellite's data transmission, reception and ground-based control systems.</p> <p>The KCNA dispatch didn't directly mention any missile or rocket launches to conduct such satellite-related tests, but it apparently referred to the North's ninth round of missile launches this year, which Seoul, Washington and Tokyo spotted on Saturday.</p> <p>Outside experts believe North Korea fired a ballistic missile carrying a camera to perform the tests described in the KCNA report. Last Monday, North Korea said it tested a camera designed to be placed on a reconnaissance satellite and released space-based photos of Earth, a day after its rivals said it conducted a ballistic missile launch.</p> <p>A spy satellite is among a long wish list of new weapons systems that Korean leader Kim Jong Un has vowed to introduce to cope with what he calls U.S. hostility. To operate a reconnaissance satellite, North Korea must launch a long-range rocket to put it into orbit. But the U.N. bans such a launch by North Korea because it considers that as a cover for testing its long-range missile technology.</p> <p>It's unclear if North Korea has developed a sufficiently capable camera to be installed on a spy satellite, as the satellite photos the country released last Monday didn't include high-resolution imagery.</p> <p>After Saturday's test, North Korea didn't immediately disclose new satellite photos, suggesting the country failed to photograph higher-resolution images than earlier ones, said analyst Cheong Seong-Chang at the private Sejong Institute in South Korea.</p> <p>“While it may succeed in what it calls ‘a reconnaissance satellite launch,’ it would still likely take a very long time for North Korea to obtain militarily meaningful reconnaissance technology because of powerful</p>

	<p>international sanctions that restrict its import of high-tech equipment and its poor civilian technology,” Cheong said.</p> <p>North Korea put its first and second Earth observation satellites into orbit in 2012 and 2016, but some foreign experts say neither one transmitted any imagery back to North Korea.</p> <p>Those satellite launches were still believed to have contributed to North Korea’s missile development program. In 2017, North Korea carried out three intercontinental ballistic missiles tests that analysts say demonstrated its potential ability to launch nuclear strikes on the American homeland.</p> <p>Experts say North Korea will likely conduct a spy satellite launch ahead of a major political anniversary in April, the 110th birthday of state founder Kim Il Sung, the late grandfather of Kim Jong Un.</p> <p>Negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington have remained largely stalled for about three years due to disputes over U.S.-led sanctions on North Korea. Earlier this year, North Korea test-fired a variety of sophisticated nuclear-capable missiles including one that analysts say places the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam within its striking distance.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/05 Seattle mayor declares he ‘inherited a mess’
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/harrell-says-he-inherited-a-mess-will-solve-crime-issues-by-putting-arrests-first-social-services-second/
GIST	<p>Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell gave a deeper look at his crime prevention initiatives Friday, touting recent successes in law enforcement, but no progress on services promised in his “holistic” approach.</p> <p>In February, Harrell announced he would direct the Seattle Police Department to focus their efforts on areas of town with concentrated criminal activity. Friday, he and law enforcement partners from the region introduced “Operation New Day” to do exactly that.</p> <p>“I’ve been on the job for about nine weeks. Yes, it seems like nine years, but nine weeks. And I did not inherit the systems that are necessary to do this kind of work,” Harrell said, later saying he “inherited a mess.”</p> <p>To create new systems, Harrell says he’s working with SPD Interim Chief Adrian Diaz, Seattle City Attorney Ann Davison, the King County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the U.S. Department of Justice.</p> <p>“So we’re pulling together this kind of One Seattle approach. We’re working with regional leaders, people that have been in this space, in this field much longer than myself.”</p> <p>The first spot to get the New Day treatment was the area around 12th Avenue and South Jackson Street in Little Saigon, where an increased police effort resulted in 80 felony arrests between January 1 and March 3, including seven felony gun violations, 25 commercial burglaries, 23 felony narcotic investigations or arrests, 19 felony warrant arrests, three felony organized retail theft arrests and one felony assault.</p> <p>SPD also touted about 120 misdemeanor arrests in the area over the same time frame, as well as nine drug overdoses treated by officers, as a result of the operation.</p> <p>Diaz said SPD will continue to monitor 12th and Jackson and work to combat crime displacement, noting that when they hone in on a specific area, the remaining criminal activity “is going to go somewhere.”</p> <p>“We’ve seen early improvement at 12th and Jackson, but to be clear that’s so much work to do. Our efforts are nowhere near complete,” Harrell said. “We don’t take victory laps. This is ongoing work.”</p> <p>But as the city began to see progress at 12th and Jackson, another high-crime area on Third Avenue saw an uptick in dangerous incidents, including two fatal shootings in the past week.</p>

Now, as [efforts shift toward Third](#), SPD has deployed a mobile precinct near the site of the most recent shooting; will keep six dedicated officers with additional patrol support in the area; and will partner with the King County Sheriff's Office to increase law enforcement presence in the area.

Even as SPD makes arrests, King County prosecutes felonies, the city attorney works to "aggregate" misdemeanors for repeat offenders and Harrell works to orchestrate the different partners, Chief Diaz says it'll take outside efforts to help keep crime at bay.

"Many challenges facing our city cannot be solved by one department," Diaz said. "SPD cannot arrest its way out of rising crime, homelessness, mental health and economic equality."

And Harrell agrees. In February, the mayor said this plan would be holistic and include social support services, echoed by Senior Deputy Mayor Monisha Harrell in the same conference.

"Public safety is all of the tools that we need in order for people in this city to actually feel safe, and that is going to also include mental health supports as well as support for substance abuse for those who have gone through this very tough time," Monisha Harrell said during the initial announcement.

"The one thing that should be very clear with this team is that we understand the holistic approach to what it is going to take to bring public safety to the city of Seattle."

But on Friday — at a news conference with five law enforcement representatives and no service providers — Harrell made clear that the administration is making arrests first, offering services second.

"After an area is somewhat stabilized, we want to have our social workers go out there and figure out who needs treatment," Harrell said when asked about social services. "One of the best times, unfortunately, to treat someone with drug and alcohol issues, as an example, could possibly be when they're arrested."

He said he was "doing an inventory" of community organizations that receive city funds before "naming organizations" to help with this working, noting for a second time that he has been in office for just over two months.

Asked again about services, the mayor told reporters to "assume that I know that people are hurting out there as a result of this drug epidemic."

"Assume that we're leading with our hearts as well," he added.

A spokesperson for Harrell confirmed after the news conference that there had not been any service push from the Mayor's Office yet at 12th and Jackson or on Third, noting "the second step is outreach."

"I think we're still at a place where we would not yet consider [12th and Jackson] held long enough," Director of Communications Jamie Housen said Friday. "It's only been a couple of weeks and we want to stabilize areas first."

The Mayor's Office again refused to provide a list of other locations likely to be addressed in Harrell's plan. Housen related the decision to the way the city manages homeless encampment sweeps, noting they don't share lists of upcoming sweeps far in advance because the order and timing is subject to change.

Housen said the Mayor's Office "will make more locations public as we decide we have more places to announce."

Diaz said after the conference that SPD will track data on serious crimes — assaults, shootings and robberies — and causes of "one-off" shootings to determine where they focus Operation New Day.

	"I couldn't tell you the other areas. We're constantly assessing that list right now," Diaz said. "These two are obviously the most dedicated areas that we want to focus on."
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Hundreds march in Seattle support Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/hundreds-march-seattle-support-ukraine/Z7XOAT7P45BKXLPEW45BOLXVP4/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — As Russia continues its offensive against Ukraine, hundreds of people took to the streets of Seattle in a show of solidarity for the war-torn country.</p> <p>People pounded the pavement in the name of freedom, ending their march at Seattle Center on Saturday.</p> <p>"We will fight for our freedom, and we're not going to surrender," said Peter Drogomirestkiy.</p> <p>"The only way we change this is to all come together and be anti-war, no matter where it is," marcher Carol Robertson said.</p> <p>The march spanned two city blocks as a sea of blue and yellow streamed the streets.</p> <p>"I hope that the people in power listen and send aid and send humanitarian aid, send air support that would prevent Ukrainian civilians from being bombed," Anna Ladokhin said.</p> <p>Ladokhin has family in Ukraine and she said there isn't a day that goes by where she doesn't frantically call them to make sure they're OK.</p> <p>"History repeats itself and you need to stand up against aggression because too many lives will be lost," Ladokhin told KIRO 7.</p> <p>People marching said it is time for Putin to be brought to justice.</p> <p>"Killing kids, having kids on buses that are in incubators. It's just wrong!" another marcher expressed.</p> <p>"He has to be stopped. Putin has to be stopped. We cannot let history repeat itself," Dixie Carter said.</p> <p>The march was Seattle's biggest show of support yet as organizers said it won't be the last.</p> <p>"Whatever I can do now is still my duty. I'm 78 years old, and these legs have still got a lot of marching in them!" Carter said.</p> <p>Those who marched said one of the things they would like to see is NATO and other countries set up a no-fly zone above Ukraine to prevent more attacks from the Russians.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin warned that Moscow will consider any third-party declaration of a Ukraine no-fly zone as "participation in the armed conflict," according to The Associated Press.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Pickleball official state sport Washington?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/politics/state-politics/pickleball-soon-official-state-sport-washington/281-687a3e98-139b-43c9-98df-6f2c962b5b6a
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — Pickleball is one signature away from becoming Washington's official state sport.</p> <p>With just a few minutes to spare before a legislative deadline Friday, the state House approved the measure on a bipartisan 83-15 vote. The bill passed the state Senate last month and now heads to Gov. Jay Inslee for his signature.</p>

	<p>If signed into law, pickleball would join a long list of official state symbols, including Palouse Falls as the state waterfall, the Columbian mammoth as the state fossil and the marmota olympus, also known as the Olympic marmot, as the state endemic mammal.</p> <p>According to the USA Pickleball Association, the sport was created on Bainbridge Island in the summer of 1965 by Washington State Rep. Joel Pritchard, who would later go on to represent the state in Congress and serve as Washington's lieutenant governor.</p> <p>One day, Pritchard and businessman Bill Bell wanted their families to make use of Pritchard's badminton court but could not find any badminton equipment. They improvised using some ping-pong paddles, a wiffleball and a modified court. Later, they introduced friend Barney McCallum to their activity, and the three men created rules for the new sport.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Rally at Capitol against WA Covid mandates
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/demonstrators-rally-against-washington-state-covid-mandates
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) — Opponents of restrictions intended to curb the spread of COVID-19 rallied at the state Capitol on Saturday, calling on attendees to remain politically active in hopes of electing more conservative lawmakers.</p> <p>The Washington State Patrol estimated that about 700 people showed up for the demonstration. Some local semi-truck drivers and other vehicles participated in a convoy to attend the protest.</p> <p>Protesters heard from speakers including Tim Eyman, an anti-tax activist, who railed against Gov. Jay Inslee's public health restrictions during the pandemic. Some of the mandates have already ended.</p> <p>A statewide mask requirement is set to lift March 12.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Mastercard, Visa halt operations Russia
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/mastercard-visa-suspend-operations-in-russia-amid-ukraine-invasion
GIST	<p>NEW YORK - Mastercard and Visa are suspending their operations in Russia, the companies said Saturday, in the latest blow to the country's financial system after its invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Mastercard said cards issued by Russian banks will no longer be supported by its network and any card issued outside the country will not work at Russian stores or ATMs.</p> <p>"We don't take this decision lightly," Mastercard said in a statement, adding that it made the move after discussions with customers, partners and governments.</p> <p>Visa said it's working with clients and partners in Russia to cease all Visa transactions over the coming days.</p> <p>"We are compelled to act following Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, and the unacceptable events that we have witnessed," Visa Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Al Kelly said in a statement.</p> <p>The suspensions are a follow-up to more limited moves earlier in the week to block financial institutions from the networks that serve as arteries for the payments system. Russian people have already been hit hard by heavy sanctions and financial penalties imposed by the U.S. government and others.</p> <p>Since the invasion of Ukraine, the value of the Russian currency, the ruble, has plunged by more than a third to a record low. That's pushing up inflation for Russian households, and all the fear has helped cause some tremendously long lines at ATMs.</p>

	<p>Many other companies around the world have also made moves to increase the financial pressure on Russia and its people because of its attack on Ukraine. Some are selling their stakes in Russian companies, such as energy giant BP, while others like Harley-Davidson halted product shipments to the country.</p> <p>"This war and the ongoing threat to peace and stability demand we respond in line with our values," Visa's Kelly said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 'Freedom convoy'-spinoff arrives Maryland
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2022/03/05/peoples-convoy-protest-hagerstown/
GIST	<p>They drove pickup trucks, RVs, 18-wheelers and minivans, some making a 2,500-mile journey from Southern California. More joined as the convoy passed through Amarillo, Tex., or rallied at a farm equipment supplier in Monrovia, Ind. And others came in Friday, as about 1,000 vehicles converged at a speedway in Hagerstown, Md., under the rallying cry of "freedom."</p> <p>The truckers and supporters are now the closest they have been to the nation's capital, where they want to hold lawmakers "accountable" for the government's pandemic responses. But it's not clear what they will do next to accomplish their goals.</p> <p>On Friday night, Brian Brase, a convoy organizer, looked out at a crowd, some dressed in red-white-and-blue beanies and waving American flags, and told them to celebrate the distance they had traveled. But they would have to wait longer to learn their final destination and what to do when they get there.</p> <p>"Well, we're going to do something," he said, laughing. "What this is is yet to be determined. Please be patient."</p> <p>The self-titled "People's Convoy" has emphasized they will not be going into D.C. and previously said they would aim for the Beltway area on March 5. Brase announced Friday morning to supporters in Lore City, Ohio, that those plans had changed. They plan to stay in Hagerstown for another rally Saturday before probably targeting another location "only two miles from the Beltway," he said, without offering specifics.</p> <p>When asked Friday night about the group's plans, People's Convoy organizer Mike Landis said: "We're going to keep annoying D.C. ... Just make them wonder a little bit." He continued: "Look, we're truck drivers; we're very spontaneous."</p> <p>The possibility of caravans of truckers heading to the Beltway has prompted security concerns, drawing in police agencies from D.C., Maryland and Virginia to monitor the group. Supporters have been joining and leaving throughout the trip, making it difficult to estimate the size of the convoy.</p> <p>But on Friday in Hagerstown, the mood of the group was celebratory and proud. Truckers blared "Take Me Home, Country Road" and ate spaghetti, burgers and chicken tacos donated by supporters. Leaders stood on the makeshift stage of a flatbed truck and lambasted the federal government for imposing vaccine and mask mandates, policies they believe violated their fundamental rights as Americans.</p> <p>Supporters cheer at the Hagerstown Speedway on March 4. Ricky Carioti/The Washington Post)</p> <p>Though protesters, inspired by the self-styled "Freedom Convoy" that occupied downtown Ottawa for weeks, have complained about the perceived infringement of their freedoms, many pandemic-related mandates have already been blocked or rescinded.</p> <p>Extremism researchers following this movement say the demonstrators' hostility toward the vaccines is just one of several anti-government, right-wing beliefs. Flatbeds, semis and other trucks and cars in the speedway parking area Friday were decorated with signs and messages referencing far-right political views and conspiracy theories, including calls to "arrest Fauci," referring to White House medical adviser</p>

Anthony S. Fauci, and equating the mandates to slavery. Some supporters wore Make America Great Again caps.

A truck rolled by with a Wisconsin license plate to join hundreds of others parked at the speedway. A group of girls pointed as it passed. "Oh, wow," they said, almost in unison. "Freedom!"

Brase said the group wants an end to the national emergency declaration in response to the coronavirus — first issued by then-President Donald Trump in March 2020 and later extended by President Biden — and for Congress to hold hearings investigating the government's response to the pandemic.

Craig Brown, 53, left his home in Sandpoint, Idaho, two weeks ago. A freight truck driver, he took a delivery of apples to Los Angeles to get closer to the convoy's launchpoint in Adelanto, Calif. He felt uncomfortable that the government could expect him to receive such a new vaccine, and he wanted to teach his teenage daughters to stand up for what they believe in. So he bought a month's worth of nonperishable food, installed an extra freezer in his vehicle, and set off to join a movement.

On his way to Los Angeles, Brown blew out the rear end of his truck and waited five days for repairs. And before he even found the other truckers, Brown adopted a two-year-old golden retriever named Copper.

By Feb. 23, he had joined the group on their way out of Southern California. Since then, Brown said the trip has been more exciting than he could have imagined. People across the country had made signs to support them, he said, and so many volunteers had brought food to rest stops that he had hardly tapped into his nonperishables.

"It's a high, seeing all the people on the overpasses and the sides of the roads," Brown said. "All these people treating us like we are heroes."

Brown, who had covid-19 last month, does not want to do anything political in D.C. He said he wants to end the trip by parking alongside the truckers and their supporters, and eating a meal together.

"We are going to eat, going to celebrate and enjoy the company of people who think we are heroes," he said.

During the journey, supporters have stood on chilly highway overpasses to wave American flags. They've cheered at rallies and followed the journey on social media. And donations have poured in. By Monday, the group claimed to have collected more than \$1.5 million.

A nonprofit says it collected over \$1.5 million for a D.C.-region-bound truck convoy. Its director recently pleaded guilty to fraud.

One convoy participant said Friday during a live stream on YouTube that "select trucks will be going to the White House" but emphasized that the group as a whole would not be going into the city. He did not elaborate on those plans.

"I don't want people thinking we are invading D.C.," he said on the live stream. "This is not the convoy going into D.C. commons. This is a few select drivers."

There are no trucker-related convoy permit applications for the coming days, National Park Service spokesman Mike Litterst said on Friday.

D.C. police said they were not aware of this latest pronouncement from one of the convoy participants, but noted that motorists do not need permission from law enforcement to drive into the District.

Authorities have pointed out, however, that large trucks are prohibited from many roads in the District, and there are many regulations governing their operation, including how long they can idle.

	<p>On Friday, D.C. police spokesman Dustin Sternbeck described the convoy as a “fluid situation,” adding, “Any sort of response strategies will be implemented in real time.”</p> <p>Sara Aniano, a Monmouth University graduate student of communication studying far-right rhetoric and conspiracy theories on social media, cautions that it is still unclear what the convoy will do in this region.</p> <p>“Maybe people don’t want to listen to Brian [Brase]. Maybe people want to go rogue and do their own thing. I wouldn’t put faith in anything,” said Aniano, who has been following the People’s Convoy through Telegram chats, other social media and live streams. “We still don’t know where and what the end game is.”</p> <p>For Brown, the endgame is a date. March 15, to be exact, when he just learned his driver’s license will expire. He will have to be in Idaho by then, but if the convoy is still together past that day?</p> <p>“I’ll turn right back around and join them,” he said.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/04 AAA: gas prices rising fastest pace ever
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/money/markets/us-gas-prices-are-rising-at-fastest-pace-ever-as-russia-intensifies-invasion-of-ukraine-aaa-says/ar-AAUCGKA
GIST	<p>U.S. gas prices are rising at a record pace as Western sanctions on Russia’s financial and shipping industries cut off oil supplies from global markets and refineries struggle to keep up with surging demand.</p> <p>The average price per gallon of unleaded gasoline jumped 9 cents at domestic service stations Friday to \$3.84, according to AAA, after increasing by 7 cents Thursday. A week ago, drivers paid 26 cents less on average per gallon.</p> <p>It’s the largest short-term price spike AAA’s data have ever recorded, spokesman Devin Gladden said. Its price-tracking records date to 2000.</p> <p>More price hikes could be in store. Some analysts predict that oil could reach \$130 per barrel. RBOB gas, a benchmark for pretax refined gasoline, traded close to \$3.50 per gallon Friday up from \$3.30 on Thursday. Crude oil Friday afternoon traded for more than \$112 a barrel, its highest mark since 2008.</p> <p>The added expenses could have sweeping impacts for U.S. consumers, experts say. Recent wage growth has insulated some consumers from climbing prices, but gasoline alone contributed to a quarter of the 6.1 percent increase in inflation over the past 12 months.</p> <p>And rising oil prices have rippling effects. As diesel prices increase, so does the cost of shipping goods through the country’s already-rattled supply chains.</p> <p>“I think people are going to have sticker shock,” Gladden said. “Even if they can purchase more because wages have increased, you also have to think about how the pandemic for a lot of families has made them more fragile than they ever have been. There’s a lot of social challenges at the moment that are compounded by higher prices.”</p> <p>The U.S. fuel market was already tight before Russia began its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, experts say, as pandemic restrictions in many states expired and consumers exercised pent-up buying power.</p> <p>But harsh economic sanctions from the White House, European Union and Japan have thrust Russia’s financial system into chaos and severely curtailed businesses from conducting international trade. Russia’s main banks have been isolated from eight of the world’s 10 largest economies. Nearly half of the world’s container ships are barred from landing at Russian ports. Russian planes are banned from the skies above western Europe, and most of North America.</p>

Though the E.U., which is heavily dependent on Russian natural gas and other fossil fuels, has not enacted energy sanctions, some international oil companies have announced plans to pull out of Russian energy investments.

“The bulk of Russia’s exports are already severely impacted by Russia’s sanctions,” Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at tracking service GasBuddy, said in a briefing with reporters. “Russia’s oil supply has already essentially been made very difficult to obtain.”

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) on Thursday said [she supported banning Russia energy imports to the U.S.](#), a proposal that’s gained bipartisan momentum in both chambers of Congress.

White House press secretary Jen Psaki on Friday said the Biden administration was [“considering a range of options” including energy sanctions](#) as Russia escalates its invasion of Ukraine, but the administration remained concerned about global energy supplies.

“What we know is that, you know, from the U.S. economy, we don’t import a lot of Russian oil, but we are looking at options that we can take right now if we were to cut the U.S. consumption of Russian energy,” Psaki said. “But what’s really most important is that we maintain a steady supply of global energy.”

She later added that “certainly the rising price of oil and the impact on gas prices is one we are focused on.”

[Washington’s crackdown on Russia intensifies as White House targets oligarchs and Pelosi backs oil ban](#)
The White House also announced Tuesday that the U.S. and other world powers would [tap 60 million barrels of oil from their strategic reserves](#) to tamp down oil prices. But the release is a stopgap measure that international authorities say is only enough to stabilize the energy market for 30 days.

The dynamics come at a difficult moment on the American energy calendar. Domestic refiners are beginning to transition production from higher-emission winter-blend gasoline to cleaner summer blends, which are more expensive to produce.

In a normal year, retail gas prices increase 50 cents per gallon from the end of February through their peak in midsummer, said Jeff Lenard, a spokesman for the National Association of Convenience Stores, a trade group whose members sell close to 80 percent of the U.S.’s retail gasoline. That’s because of combination of rising consumer demand and the increased costs associated with summer blends, he said.

But 2022 is far from a normal year, and consumers have shown enthusiasm to travel and spend money after two years of taking pandemic precautions, De Haan said.

“Americans still have pent-up demand for getting out,” he said. “Things are wide open now. The economy is open. People feel safer flying. And with the reduction in mask mandates, that may embolden more people to travel and feel free. Until the national average [for a gallon of gas] reaches \$4.50 or \$5, I don’t know that people will really slow down consumption.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 UN: food prices record high in February
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/food-prices-hit-record-high-february-un-agency-says-2022-03-04/?taid=62237c2407024b0001560037
GIST	<p>ROME, March 4 (Reuters) - (This March 4 story corrects to replace year-on-year pct change in headline and first paragraph to 20.7% from 24.1% after FAO issued an official correction)</p> <p>World food prices hit a record high in February, led by a surge in vegetable oils and dairy products, to post a 20.7% increase year-on-year, the U.N. food agency said on Friday.</p>

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) food price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 140.7 points last month against a downwardly revised 135.4 in January. That figure was previously given as 135.7.

Higher food prices have contributed to a broader surge in inflation as economies recover from the coronavirus crisis and the FAO has warned that the higher costs are putting poorer populations at risk in countries reliant on imports.

FAO economist Upali Galketi Aratchilage said concerns over crop conditions and export availabilities provided only a partial explanation to the increase in global food prices.

"A much bigger push for food price inflation comes from outside food production, particularly the energy, fertilizer and feed sectors," he said. "All these factors tend to squeeze profit margins of food producers, discouraging them from investing and expanding production."

Data for the February report was mostly compiled before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Concerns over tensions in the Black Sea area were already weighing on agricultural markets even before the violence flared, but analysts warn a prolonged conflict could have a major impact on grain exports. [read more](#)

FAO said its vegetable oils index rose 8.5% month-on-month in February to chalk up another record high, propelled by rising palm, soy, and sunflower oil prices. Ukraine and Russia account for about 80% of global exports of sunflower oil.

The cereal price index rose 3.0% on the month, with maize prices up 5.1% and wheat prices increasing 2.1%, largely reflecting uncertainty about global supply flows from Black Sea ports. [read more](#)

FAO's dairy price index increased 6.4%, its sixth consecutive monthly rise, underpinned by tight global supplies, while meat prices rose 1.1% in February.

By contrast, sugar was the sole index to post a decrease, shedding 1.9% from the previous month due partly to favourable production prospects in major exporters India and Thailand.

FAO also issued its first projections for cereal output in 2022, seeing global wheat production rising to 790 million tonnes from 775.4 million in 2021, thanks in part to hopes of high yields and extensive planting in Canada, the United States and Asia.

The U.N. agency cautioned however that its projections did not take into account the possible impact of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

FAO said maize outputs in Argentina and Brazil in 2022 were forecast at well above-average levels, notably in Brazil where the maize crop was seen reaching a record high 112 million tonnes.

World cereal utilization in 2021/22 was forecast to rise 1.5% above the 2020/21 level, hitting 2.802 billion tonnes. FAO's forecast for world cereal stocks by the close of seasons in 2022 stood at 836 million tonnes.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Putin: sanctions akin to declaration of war
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-says-western-sanctions-are-akin-declaration-war-2022-03-05/
GIST	<p>LONDON, March 5 (Reuters) - President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday that Western sanctions on Russia were akin to a declaration of war and warned that any attempt to impose a no-fly zone in Ukraine would be tantamount to entering the conflict.</p> <p>Putin reiterated that his aims in Ukraine are to defend Russian speaking communities through the "demilitarisation and de-Nazification" of the country so that it became neutral.</p>

	<p>Ukraine and Western countries have dismissed this as a baseless pretext for the invasion he launched on Feb. 24 and have imposed a sweeping range of sanctions aimed at isolating Moscow.</p> <p>"These sanctions that are being imposed are akin to a declaration of war but thank God it has not come to that," Putin said, speaking to a group of women flight attendants at an Aeroflot training centre near Moscow.</p> <p>He said any attempt by another power to impose a no-fly zone in Ukraine would be considered by Russia to be a step into the military conflict. NATO has rejected Kyiv's request for a no-fly zone, on the grounds it would escalate the war beyond Ukraine.</p> <p>Putin said there were no conscripts involved in the military operation, which he said was being carried out only by professional soldiers.</p> <p>"There is not one conscript and we don't plan for there to be," Putin said. "Our army will fulfil all the tasks. I don't doubt that at all. Everything is going to plan."</p> <p>Putin dismissed concerns that some sort of martial law or emergency situation could be declared in Russia. He said such a measure was imposed only when there was significant internal or external threat.</p> <p>"We don't plan to introduce any kind of special regime on Russian territory - there is currently no need," Putin said.</p> <p>His government has clamped down on protests in Russia against the war.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/04 Drone enthusiasts sign up to repel Russia
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/ukrainian-drone-enthusiasts-sign-up-to-repel-russian-forces/2022/03/04/432a0bc4-9bf7-11ec-9987-9dceee62a3f6_story.html
GIST	<p>In better times, Ukrainian drone enthusiasts flew their gadgets into the sky to photograph weddings, fertilize soybean fields or race other drones for fun. Now some are risking their lives by forming a volunteer drone force to help their country repel the Russian invasion.</p> <p>“Kyiv needs you and your drone at this moment of fury!” read a Facebook post late last week from the Ukrainian military, calling for citizens to donate hobby drones and to volunteer as experienced pilots to operate them.</p> <p>One entrepreneur who runs a retail store selling consumer drones in the capital said its entire stock of some 300 drones made by Chinese company DJI has been dispersed for the cause. Others are working to get more drones across the border from friends and colleagues in Poland and elsewhere in Europe.</p> <p>“Why are we doing this? We have no other choice. This is our land, our home,” said Denys Sushko, head of operations at Kyiv-based industrial drone technology company DroneUA, which before the war was helping to provide drone services to farmers and energy companies.</p> <p>Sushko fled his home late last week after his family had to take cover from a nearby explosion. He spoke to The Associated Press by phone and text message Friday after climbing up a tree for better reception.</p> <p>“We try to use absolutely everything that can help protect our country and drones are a great tool for getting real-time data,” said Sushko, who doesn’t have a drone with him but is providing expertise. “Now in Ukraine no one remains indifferent. Everyone does what they can.”</p> <p>Unlike the much larger Turkish-built combat drones that Ukraine has in its arsenal, off-the-shelf consumer drones aren’t much use as weapons — but they can be powerful reconnaissance tools. Civilians have been</p>

using the aerial cameras to track Russian convoys and then relay the images and GPS coordinates to Ukrainian troops. Some of the machines have night vision and heat sensors.

But there's a downside: DJI, the leading provider of consumer drones in Ukraine and around the world, provides a tool that can easily pinpoint the location of an inexperienced drone operator, and no one really knows what the Chinese firm or its customers might do with that data. That makes some volunteers uneasy. DJI declined to discuss specifics about how it has responded to the war.

Taras Troiak, a dealer of DJI drones who started the Kyiv retail store, said DJI has been sending mixed signals about whether it's providing preferential access to — or disabling — its drone detection platform AeroScope, which both sides of the conflict can potentially use to monitor the other's flight paths and the communication links between a drone and the device that's controlling it.

DJI spokesperson Adam Lisberg said wartime uses were “never anticipated” when the company created AeroScope to give policing and aviation authorities — including clients in both Russia and Ukraine — a window into detecting drones flying in their immediate airspace. He said some users in Ukraine have reported technical problems but DJI has not disabled the tool or given preferential access.

In the meantime, Ukrainian drone experts said they've been doing whatever they can to teach operators how to protect their whereabouts.

“There are a number of tricks that allow you to increase the level of security when using them,” Sushko said.

Sushko said many in the industry are now trying to get more small drones — including DJI alternatives — transported into Ukraine from neighboring European countries. They can also be used to assist search-and-rescue operations.

Ukraine has a thriving community of drone experts, some of whom were educated at the National Aviation University or the nearby Kyiv Polytechnic University and went on to found local drone and robotics startups.

“They've got this homebuilt industry and all these smart people who build drones,” said Faine Greenwood, a U.S.-based consultant on drones for civic uses such as disaster response.

Troiak's DJI-branded store in Kyiv, which is now shuttered as city residents take shelter, was a hub for that community because it runs a maintenance center and hosts training sessions and a hobby club. Even the country's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, once paid a visit to the store to buy a drone for one of his children, Troiak said.

A public drone-focused Facebook group administered by Troiak counts more than 15,000 members who have been trading tips about how to assist Ukrainian troops. One drone photographer who belongs to the Ukrainian Association of Drone Racing team told The Associated Press he decided to donate his DJI Mavic drone to the military rather than try to fly it himself. He and others asked not to be named out of fear for their safety.

“The risk to civilian drone operators inside Ukraine is still great,” said Australian drone security expert Mike Monnik. “Locating the operator's location could result in directed missile fire, given what we've seen in the fighting so far. It's no longer rules of engagement as we have had in previous conflicts.” In recent days, Russian-language channels on the messaging app Telegram have featured discussions on ways to find Ukrainian drones, Monnik said.

Some in Ukraine's drone community already have experience deploying their expertise in conflict zones because of the country's long-running conflict with Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. Monnik's firm, DroneSec, has tracked multiple instances just in the past year of both sides of that conflict arming small drones with explosives. One thing that Ukrainians said they've learned is that small

	<p>quadcopter drones, such as those sold at stores, are rarely effective at hitting a target with explosive payloads.</p> <p>“It would seem somewhat short-sighted to waste one,” said Greenwood, the consultant based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. “I assume the chief goal would be recon. But if things are getting desperate, who knows.”</p> <p>DJI also has experience in responding to warfighters trying to weaponize its drones and used so-called “geofencing” technology to block drone movements during conflicts in Syria and Iraq. It’s not clear yet if it will do the same in Ukraine; even if it does, there are ways to work around it.</p> <p>Small civilian drones are no match against Russian combat power but will likely become increasingly important in a protracted war, leaving drone-makers no option to be completely neutral. Any action they take or avoid is “indirectly taking a side,” said P.W. Singer, a New America fellow who wrote a book about war robots.</p> <p>“We will see ad-hoc arming of these small civilian drones much the way we’ve seen that done in conflicts around the world from Syria to Iraq and Yemen and Afghanistan,” Singer said. “Just like an IED or a Molotov cocktail, they won’t change the tide of battle but they will definitely make it difficult for Russian soldiers.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/05 China seeks to ‘resolve’ Taiwan question
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/05/china-taiwan-ukraine-report/
GIST	<p>China is committed to “resolving the Taiwan question in the new era,” it said in its annual government report issued Saturday, using sharper wording than in previous such reports amid debate among foreign-policy experts over whether Beijing would attempt a takeover of the self-ruled island similar to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Beijing’s annual work report traditionally includes a couple of paragraphs declaring that the government will continue working toward the unification of Taiwan. This is the first year since President Xi Jinping came to power a decade ago that this section of the annual report includes a time frame — “in the new era” — although it’s unclear how long a period this means.</p> <p>The stronger wording is in line with Beijing’s signals of impatience on Taiwan over the past few years, which have alarmed residents of the island. Xi said in 2019 that “we should not allow this problem to be passed down from one generation to the next.”</p> <p>Huang Kwei-bo, associate professor of diplomacy at Taiwan’s National Chengchi University, said the term “in the new era” was closely associated with Xi’s rule and has been showing up more often in various contexts.</p> <p>Huang said Xi likely wants to send the message that he “is ready to deal with both old and new problems in the new era.”</p> <p>Saturday’s report also repeated previous language on advancing “the peaceful growth of relations across the Taiwan Strait” and opposing “separatist activities.”</p> <p>After being defeated by Mao Zedong’s Communist forces in 1949, Chinese Nationalist troops fled to Taiwan and set up rule over the island. Beijing has declared since that it will unify Taiwan with the mainland, by force if necessary.</p> <p>Taiwan has developed into one of Asia’s most vibrant democracies and progressive societies: For instance, it is one of the few societies in the world that has ever elected an unmarried woman as president.</p>

Russia's invasion of Ukraine — and the reluctance of Western countries to send troops to defend it — has raised worries in Taiwan that Beijing might be emboldened to try a similar move. The catchphrase “Today Ukraine, Tomorrow Taiwan,” [has circulated](#) uneasily across the island.

Foreign-policy circles have been awash in discussions about whether Xi might follow Putin's example and invade Taiwan. Some point out similar ambitions in both leaders to build their empires, unfazed by criticism from the West. But others cite [notable differences](#), including Taiwan's key role in global supply chains and the island's location near key U.S. allies such as South Korea and Japan.

China's annual work report is also watched by the business sector for its economic growth target. This year it was set at around 5.5 percent, which would be the second-lowest rate of gross domestic product growth since the 1990s. (The lowest was 2020's 2.3 percent GDP growth, as China went into lockdown for the [coronavirus](#) pandemic). China said its economy rebounded to 8.1 percent growth in 2021.

While the report, delivered by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, does not mention the war in Ukraine, it cites economic challenges in general, and says maintaining economic stability is the “top priority” this year. Li said tax cuts to businesses and construction projects are on the way.

“In the face of new downward pressure, the task of ensuring stable growth needs to occupy an even more prominent position,” Li said in the report.

Li also said one of the goals this year would be to control coronavirus infections in a “targeted” way, suggesting an approaching loosening of the draconian policies that have kept China's coronavirus infection count close to zero, but have weighed on the economy and upended daily life.

“Occurrences of local cases must be handled in a scientific and targeted manner, and the normal order of work and life must be ensured,” Li said in the work report.

This year is a politically important one for Xi, who is largely expected to stay on as China's leader for a third five-year term, disregarding the established practice of stepping aside after two terms.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 New reality invasion global economy impact
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/03/05/global-economy-russia-ukraine/
GIST	<p>Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the financial reckoning imposed on Moscow in response are proof that the triumphant globalization campaign that began more than 30 years ago has reached a dead end.</p> <p>Fallout from the fighting in Ukraine will take a meaningful bite out of the global economic recovery this year, with the greatest impact in Europe, economists said. A spike in oil prices to more than \$110 per barrel and renewed supply chain disruptions — including fresh headaches for the auto industry — also are likely to aggravate U.S. inflation, already at a 40-year high.</p> <p>But the war's long-term consequences could be more profound. Even before Russian President Vladimir Putin sent tanks and missiles hurtling toward Ukraine, years of deteriorating U.S.-China relations and failed global trade talks had stalled the tighter integration of finance and trade flows that had been anticipated during globalization's heyday.</p> <p>What comes next is unlikely to mirror the Cold War's distinct blocs. Even as the global economic order fractures, no rival ideologies compete for supremacy. And China's harsh authoritarian turn under President Xi Jinping co-exists with extensive commercial ties to the United States, Europe and Japan. But governments, corporations and investors all are adjusting to a new reality.</p> <p>“It's the end of one era and the beginning of another, which is a less complete form of globalization than we had ambitions for in the immediate post-Cold War era,” said Michael Smart, managing director of Rock Creek Global Advisors. “We have to think differently about what we mean by the global trading</p>

system. There are certain requirements that, if you don't meet them, you're not part of it. You can't be in the club."

With the United States, Europe, Canada, Britain and Japan uniting to punish Russia with [unprecedented financial sanctions](#), the war has triggered a "major geopolitical realignment" akin to the aftershocks from the 9/11 terrorist attacks, according to Citibank analysts.

Virtually overnight, most major Russian banks were blocked from moving money across borders. Moscow's [stock market](#) has been closed for a week. Russian customers are cut off from much of the world's most advanced technologies.

On Friday, Russia's isolation deepened as the country's communications regulator blocked access to Facebook, one of the few sources of information that the government already did not control, saying it had discriminated against Russia media.

In Washington, top Democrats and Republicans have begun demanding that the United States stop importing oil from Russia, a move that would intensify Moscow's financial plight if European nations followed suit.

"This event does seem to be one that is a game changer and will be with us for a very long time," [Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell](#) told Congress last week.

Russia's financial exile caps more than a decade of erosion in globalization, beginning with the 2008 financial crisis and continuing through the rise of Xi in 2012, the U.S.-China trade war that began in 2018, and diplomats' repeated failures to agree on trade liberalization. The [coronavirus](#) pandemic, which highlighted the risk of ocean-spanning supply lines and restricted international travel, further thinned cross-border links.

Together, Russia and Ukraine account for 3 percent of global output, according to JPMorgan Chase. Putin's brutal invasion of his neighbor, however, will have broad economic repercussions, economists and government officials said.

"There's a chance — which increases with every human rights outrage that Putin commits — that Russia is shut out of the global economy for a long time. ... You are removing this big chunk of the global economy and going back to the situation we had in the Cold War when the Soviet bloc was pretty much closed off," said Maury Obstfeld, an economics professor at the University of California at Berkeley. "But that doesn't mean the rest of the world can't be tightly integrated in terms of trade and finance."

Expectations for an enduring era of peace and prosperity were high in the early 1990s. After the Soviet Union ceased to exist in December 1991, Russia embarked on a helter-skelter series of economic reforms, including establishment of the country's first stock market, and welcomed foreign investors.

China, meanwhile, was also moving along a market-oriented path that relied upon access to foreign technology, capital and executives.

From the outset, many U.S. officials saw a link between political and economic freedom. By 2000, when Congress was debating China's entry into the World Trade Organization, President Bill Clinton saw trade ties heralding "very profound change," including in the country's political system.

"By joining the WTO, China is not simply agreeing to import more of our products; it is agreeing to import one of democracy's most cherished values: economic freedom," Clinton said at the time. "The more China liberalizes its economy, the more fully it will liberate the potential of its people — their initiative, their imagination, their remarkable spirit of enterprise. And when individuals have the power, not just to dream but to realize their dreams, they will demand a greater say."

Hopes for a steady forward march of free markets and free people have proved unrealistic. Globally, democracy is down. Poverty is up.

The number of countries considered “not free” by the nonprofit Freedom House and those with annual average economic growth of less than 3 percent have risen in tandem.

Even before the pandemic drove the developing world into deeper poverty, about 70 percent of the world’s countries were experiencing subpar growth, roughly three times the figure in 2008, according to the World Bank. Nondemocratic rule similarly spread across much of the globe.

In 2020, for the first time in more than two decades, global poverty increased, according to World Bank data. Russia’s recession will intensify that trend, including in the Central Asian republics that once were part of the Soviet Union. Remittances from migrant workers from Central Asia who work in Russia make up about 30 percent of the economy in both the Kyrgyz republic and Tajikistan and are almost certain to plummet as Russia plunges into a deep recession and the ruble sinks.

“We moved out of that benign era a while ago. But this [war] has brought it home very forcefully,” said Carmen Reinhart, chief economist for the World Bank. “The golden era for globalization ended with the global financial crisis in 2008.”

Global trade and financial links also have plateaued.

World trade volumes would be nearly twice as high today if they had continued on their 2000-2008 path, according to data from CPB Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis, an independent research institute.

Likewise, major cross-border financial flows have virtually stagnated even as the global economy grew about 30 percent larger since 2008. Top banks have \$31.1 trillion in foreign exposure today, little more than the \$30.4 trillion in early 2008, according to data from the Bank for International Settlements in Basel, Switzerland.

Financial markets that once rose and fell in near lockstep are increasingly going their own way, according to MSCI research. A decade ago, markets in different regions moved together about 80 percent of the time. Today, the correlation is a bit more than 50 percent, reflecting “less of a globalized economy,” according to Peter Zangari, MSCI’s global head of research and product development.

It’s not that globalization is over. But it will be different.

“It’s closing the door on a chapter that never had a strong intellectual basis,” said economist Joseph Stiglitz of Columbia University. “It won’t be the same. What we’re going to see is a process of delinking, disengagement. But it’s going to be slow, particularly in the case of China.”

Indeed, the United States since 2018 has been limiting the flow of high-tech goods to China and raising tariffs on Chinese imports. Chinese authorities, watching the United States and its allies deliberately shove Russia into a deep recession, are expected to intensify their efforts to become more self-sufficient in production of goods such as semiconductors.

The United States, too, is moving in that direction with President Biden’s “made-in-America” initiative designed to spur domestic manufacturing.

China’s economy, however, is 10 times the size of Russia’s and is far more intertwined with the outside world — making it unlikely that Beijing or its trading partners would seek a complete divorce.

The war’s immediate impact on the U.S. recovery is likely to be limited. Total U.S. two-way trade with Russia and Ukraine last year amounted to \$40 billion, and Wall Street banks have less than \$15 billion at stake in loans to Russian borrowers.

But there will be collateral damage from the sweeping U.S. and allied sanctions that have slashed most of Russia's links to global trade and finance. Gas prices in the United States, which now average a nine-year high of \$3.84 per gallon, may soon smash \$4, according to Capital Economics.

Russia also is a major producer of other commodities, including wheat and industrial metals. The price of palladium, which is used to make catalytic converters, is up more than 60 percent this year for automobiles.

Renewed supply chain disruptions also will put upward pressure on inflation. Both Federal Express and United Parcel Service have halted shipments to and from Russia. Maersk, the giant ocean cargo carrier, stopped accepting new bookings this week for Russia-bound goods, causing cargo to begin piling up at terminals across Europe.

"Cargo is getting delayed and our already congested transshipment hubs are getting more pressured," Maersk said in a customer advisory. "This is a global impact, and not only limited to trade with Russia."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Sanctions: punish Putin, fuel Russia unrest
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/04/us/politics/russia-sanctions-ukraine.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — As they impose historic sanctions on Russia, the Biden administration and European governments have set new goals: devastate the Russian economy as punishment for the world to witness, and create domestic pressure on President Vladimir V. Putin to halt his war in Ukraine, current and former U.S. officials say.</p> <p>The harsh penalties — which have hammered the ruble, shut down Russia's stock market and prompted bank runs — contradict previous declarations by U.S. officials that they would refrain from inflicting pain on ordinary Russians. "We target them carefully to avoid even the appearance of targeting the average Russian civilian," Daleep Singh, the deputy national security adviser for international economics, said at a White House briefing last month.</p> <p>The escalation in sanctions this week has occurred much faster than many officials had anticipated, largely because European leaders have embraced the most aggressive measures proposed by Washington, U.S. officials said.</p> <p>With Russia's economy crumbling, major companies — Apple, Boeing and Shell among them — are suspending or exiting operations in the country. The Biden administration said on Thursday that it would not offer sanctions relief amid Mr. Putin's increasingly brutal offensive.</p> <p>The thinking among some U.S. and European officials is that Mr. Putin might stop the war if enough Russians protest in the streets and enough tycoons turn on him. Other U.S. officials emphasize the goals of punishment and future deterrence, saying that the carcass of the Russian economy will serve as a visible consequence of Mr. Putin's actions and a warning for other aggressors.</p> <p>But Russia's \$1.5 trillion economy is the world's 11th largest. No countries have tried pushing an economy of that size to the brink of collapse, with unknown consequences for the world. And the actions of the United States and Europe could pave the way for a new type of great-power conflict in the future.</p> <p>The moves have also ignited questions in Washington and in European capitals over whether cascading events in Russia could lead to "regime change," or rulership collapse, which President Biden and European leaders are careful to avoid mentioning.</p> <p>"This isn't the Russian people's war," Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken said in a news conference on Wednesday. But, he added, "the Russian people will suffer the consequences of their leaders' choices."</p>

“The economic costs that we’ve been forced to impose on Russia are not aimed at you,” he said. “They are aimed at compelling your government to stop its actions, to stop its aggression.”

The harshest sanctions by far are ones that [prevent the Central Bank of Russia](#) from tapping into much of its \$643 billion in foreign currency reserves, which has led to a steep drop in the value of the ruble. Panic has set in across Russia. Citizens are scrambling to withdraw money from banks, preferably in dollars, and [some are fleeing the country](#).

The United States and Europe also announced new sanctions this week against [oligarchs with close ties to Mr. Putin](#). Officials are moving to seize their houses, yachts and private jets around the world. French officials on Thursday snatched the superyacht of Igor Sechin, the chief executive of Rosneft, the Russian state oil giant.

“The sanctions have turned out to be quite unprecedented,” said Maria Snegovaya, a visiting scholar at George Washington University who has studied [U.S. sanctions on Russia](#). “Everybody in Russia is horrified. They’re trying to think of the best way to preserve their money.”

The French finance minister, Bruno Le Maire, has used some of the harshest language yet to articulate the mission, [telling a radio program](#) on Tuesday that Western nations were “waging an all-out economic and financial war on Russia” to “cause the collapse of the Russian economy.” He later said he regretted his words.

Evidence of shock and anger among Russians — mostly anecdotal in a country with [restricted speech](#) and little public opinion polling — has raised the specter of mass political dissent, which, if strong enough, could threaten Mr. Putin’s grip on power.

Senator Lindsey Graham, Republican of South Carolina, [said on Fox News](#), “The best way for this to end is having Eliot Ness or Wyatt Earp in Russia, the Russian Spring, so to speak, where people rise up and take him down.”

Mr. Graham added: “So I’m hoping somebody in Russia will understand that he’s destroying Russia, and you need to take this guy out by any means possible,” reiterating [his Twitter post](#) on Thursday [calling for an assassination of Mr. Putin](#).

A spokesman for Prime Minister Boris Johnson of Britain said on Monday that the sanctions were “intended to bring down the Putin regime.” Mr. Johnson’s office quickly corrected the statement, saying that it did not reflect his government’s view and that the goal of the measures was to stop Russia’s assault on Ukraine.

Michael A. McFaul, a former U.S. ambassador to Moscow, called the talk of Mr. Putin’s overthrow unhelpful, emphasizing that the sanctions should be tailored and described as a means of stopping the invasion. “The objective should be to end the war,” he said.

But while the Biden administration has said it is still open to diplomacy with Russia, it has not offered to reverse any of the sanctions in exchange for de-escalation.

“Right in this moment, they’re marching toward Kyiv with a convoy and continuing to take reportedly barbaric steps against the people of Ukraine,” Jen Psaki, the White House press secretary, said on Thursday. “So, no, now is not the moment where we are offering options for reducing sanctions.”

But in an interview on Friday with the Russian news agency TASS, Victoria J. Nuland, the U.S. under secretary of state for political affairs, suggested terms for possible sanctions relief, albeit maximalist ones. She said that Mr. Putin had to end the war, help to “rebuild” Ukraine and recognize its sovereignty, borders and right to exist. Those are conditions that the Russian leader is highly unlikely to consider.

All the while, Biden officials have sought to assure the Russian people that they take no pleasure in their suffering. The United States and Europe have tried to spare Russians some of the effects, including allowing sales of consumer technology to Russia despite [sweeping new limits on exports](#).

They have also refrained from imposing energy sanctions because of [Europe's dependence on Russian gas](#) and the risk of higher oil prices.

Even so, Mr. Putin and his aides are doing their best to find some political advantage in the sanctions, arguing that the real goal for the West has always been to weaken Russia. As he launched his invasion last week, Mr. Putin said the United States would have sanctioned his country “no matter what.”

In an interview with Al Jazeera on Wednesday, Russia’s foreign minister, Sergey V. Lavrov, said that the sanctions were meant to “target regular people” and that the West had cut off cultural exchange programs and even [Russian sports teams](#).

Whatever their precise goal, sanctions have a poor record of persuading governments to change their behavior. The Trump administration’s sanctions on Iran, perhaps the harshest imposed on any country, failed to compel Tehran to stop supporting militias across the Middle East or halt its efforts at uranium enrichment after President Donald J. Trump withdrew from a nuclear agreement. North Korea has pushed forward with a nuclear weapons program despite major sanctions by four American presidents.

The same has largely been true of U.S. sanctions on Syria, Cuba and Venezuela.

On occasion, the U.S. government has achieved modest goals with sanctions. Some analysts and U.S. officials argue that Iran began negotiations on a nuclear agreement after the Obama administration imposed sanctions. Trump administration officials said sanctions helped compel Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea, to meet with Mr. Trump (along with Twitter messages and letters between the leaders).

And some former Obama officials, including ones who now serve in the Biden administration, have argued that sanctions on Russia in 2014 helped to dissuade Mr. Putin from pushing deeper into Ukraine after he annexed Crimea and started a separatist war in the country’s east.

This winter, the Biden administration used the threat of sanctions to try to deter Mr. Putin from invading Ukraine. It warned that the measures would be severe but did not go into details. U.S. officials did not publicly mention the possibility of penalizing Russia’s central bank — the harshest sanction imposed so far — because they were uncertain whether European nations would be on board, a former U.S. official said.

After the United States, Britain and the European Union announced sanctions on the central bank, the ruble plummeted in value on Monday. The bank no longer has access to foreign currency reserves held outside Russia, so it cannot use those assets to buy rubles and prop up its value. The Treasury Department has also imposed sanctions on some Russian state-owned companies that have foreign currency holdings that the central bank could tap.

As its economy trembled, Russia suspended trading on its stock market. On a Russian news program, Alexander Butmanov, an investment analyst, raised a toast and said, “Dear stock market, you were close to us, you were interesting. Rest in peace, dear comrade.”

Some Russians this week were driving to borders with bags of cash.

But if the goal of sanctions is to compel Mr. Putin to halt his war, then the end point seems far-off.

“The Russian political system doesn’t depend on the people’s approval. That matters, but it’s not the most important thing,” Ms. Snegovaya said. “It might depend on the scale of the crisis — if we see lots of protests in the streets, it might make the Kremlin think twice.”

HEADLINE	03/04 US, European allies deliver array weapons
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/04/us/politics/russia-ukraine-weapons.html
GIST	<p>NEAR UKRAINE'S BORDER — Some 14 wide-bodied aircraft transported a bristling array of Javelin antitank missiles, rocket launchers, guns and ammunition to an airfield near Ukraine's border on Friday, as the United States and European allies ramped up their efforts to give the Ukrainian military a leg up in battling a foreign enemy that far outguns it.</p> <p>The top U.S. military adviser to President Biden inspected the weapons transfer operation in an unannounced trip, meeting with troops and personnel from 22 countries who were working around the clock to unload the armaments for transport by land to the Ukrainian forces.</p> <p>The American weaponry, which included the Javelins as well as small arms and munitions, was part of a \$350 million package that Mr. Biden authorized on Saturday; within two days, one official said, the deliveries were landing at an airfield near the border that can process 17 airplanes a day. What began as a trickle — with only two or three planes arriving a day — is now a steady flow, the official said, with 14 loads from one airfield alone.</p> <p>Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, included a stop at the airfield as part of a trip to the region. As he spoke to troops, cargos of Javelins rolled behind him. Nearby, two C-17s, the enormous cargo workhorses of the U.S. Air Force, sat on the tarmac.</p> <p>The United States has delivered nearly 70 percent of the \$350 million package to Ukraine's military, a senior Pentagon official said on Friday. It expects to complete the entire shipment in the next week or so.</p> <p>The shipment of weapons — which also includes Stinger antiaircraft missiles from U.S. military stockpiles, mostly in Germany — represents the largest single authorized transfer of arms from U.S. military warehouses to another country, the Pentagon official said.</p> <p>U.S. officials said the weaponry, equipment and other war matériel were being flown to neighboring countries like Poland and Romania and then shipped over land into western Ukraine to commanders for distribution across the country.</p> <p>The weapons have quickly found their way into the hands of Ukrainian soldiers, who are using them to fight the advancing Russian force, U.S. officials said on Friday.</p> <p>“All of us have been tremendously impressed by how effectively the Ukrainian armed forces have been using the equipment that we've provided them,” said the senior Pentagon official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss operational matters. “Kremlin watchers have also been surprised by this, and how they have slowed the Russian advance and performed extremely well on the battlefield.”</p> <p>A special coordination cell reporting to the U.S. military's European Command in Stuttgart, Germany, is managing the torrent of weapons and equipment from the United States and at least 14 other countries, including Britain, Canada and Lithuania, the Pentagon official said.</p> <p>Previous arms drawdowns, as the government calls shipments taken from existing U.S. military stocks, have taken weeks or months to wend their way through the Washington bureaucracy and then to delivery in the field.</p> <p>A \$60 million arms package to Ukraine announced in August, for example, was not completed until November. The last portions of a \$200 million weapons package announced in late December were still trickling into Ukraine, the Pentagon official said.</p> <p>Altogether, the United States has provided more than \$3 billion in security assistance to Ukraine since 2014, when Russia first invaded parts of the country. About \$1 billion of that has been sent in the past year, under the Biden administration.</p>

Russian fighter-bombers and ground forces have so far been too busy with a stiff resistance from Ukrainian air and land forces to attack the arms deliveries moving into western Ukraine. But American analysts warn that could quickly shift, especially as Russian forces in the south and east have picked up momentum in recent days. A northern advance on Kyiv, the capital, and Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, remained largely stalled, Pentagon officials said.

The weapons also include rocket launchers from the Dutch, Javelins from the Estonians, Stinger surface-to-air missiles from the Germans, Poles and Latvians, and machine guns and sniper rifles from the Czechs.

Because of concern over drawing Russian attention, reporters accompanying General Milley were not permitted to disclose exactly where along Ukraine's border the aircraft were unloading.

General Milley also traveled to a training field near Nowa Deba, in southern Poland, where paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne have been training with Polish troops. The coordination is part of Mr. Biden's effort to reassure Eastern European allies — and assure President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia — that while NATO is not sending troops into Ukraine, which is not a member of the alliance, it will fight any incursion into the territory of a NATO member.

Officials were adamant that NATO was standing up to Mr. Putin. "NATO is more unified than I've ever seen NATO unified before," Gen. Christopher G. Cavoli, the commander of U.S. Army Europe and Africa, told reporters at the training center. "I've been working since I was a second lieutenant, in 1988, and I can tell you I've never seen the resolve, and the practical expression of combat readiness, as I've seen in the alliance ground forces right now. It's remarkable."

Shortly after meeting with troops at Nowa Deba, General Milley flew by helicopter to Rzeszow, Poland, the headquarters of the 82nd Airborne in the country, which, he said, was deployed to "deter any further territorial aggression by Russia."

Maj. Gen. Chris Donahue, who commanded the U.S. evacuation from Afghanistan after Kabul fell to the Taliban in August and who is the commanding general of the 82nd Airborne, said the Polish headquarters could temporarily house some 2,500 evacuees from Ukraine. The site, which is in an arena, is meant to serve as a staging ground for evacuees who are citizens of the United States and other NATO countries. Bunk beds filled the room, most of them empty.

Officials said that while there had been a deluge of Ukrainian refugees crossing the border, the number of American evacuees was small. Most American citizens who left Ukraine traveled by air or crossed at other areas along Ukraine's borders, the officials said.

At an operations center in the arena, Polish border guards, American intelligence officials, paratroopers and State Department desk officers huddled over maps of Ukraine.

"They were smart to bring in all U.S. government agencies and international partners working on solutions for Ukraine," said Col. Dave Butler, a spokesman for General Milley.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 American veterans join the fight in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/us/american-veterans-volunteer-ukraine-russia.html
GIST	<p>Hector served two violent tours in Iraq as a United States Marine, then got out, got a pension and a civilian job, and thought he was done with military service. But on Friday, he boarded a plane for one more deployment, this time as a volunteer in Ukraine. He checked in several bags filled with rifle scopes, helmets and body armor donated by other veterans.</p> <p>"Sanctions can help, but sanctions can't help right now, and people need help right now," said the former Marine, who lives in Tampa Bay, Fla., and like other veterans interviewed for this article asked that only his first name be used for security reasons. "I can help right now."</p>

He is one of a surge of American veterans who say they are now preparing to join [the fight in Ukraine](#), emboldened by the invitation of the country's president, [Volodymyr Zelensky](#), who earlier this week announced he was creating an "international legion" and asked volunteers from around the world to help defend his nation against Russia.

Ukraine's minister of foreign affairs, Dmytro Kuleba, echoed the call for fighters, [saying on Twitter](#), "Together we defeated Hitler, and we will defeat Putin, too."

Hector said he hoped to cross the border to train Ukrainians in his expertise: armored vehicles and heavy weapons.

"A lot of veterans, we have a calling to serve, and we trained our whole career for this kind of war," he said. "Sitting by and doing nothing? I had to do that when Afghanistan fell apart, and it weighted heavily on me. I had to act."

All across the United States, small groups of military veterans are gathering, planning and getting passports in order. After years of serving in smoldering occupations, trying to spread democracy in places that had only a tepid interest in it, many are hungry for what they see as a righteous fight to defend freedom against an autocratic aggressor with a conventional and target-rich army.

"It's a conflict that has a clear good and bad side, and maybe that stands apart from other recent conflicts," said David Ribardo, a former Army officer who now owns a property management business in Allentown, Pa. "A lot of us are watching what is happening and just want to grab a rifle and go over there."

After the invasion, he saw veterans flooding social media eager to join the fight. Unable to go because of commitments here, he has spent the past week acting as a sort of middle man for a group called [Volunteers for Ukraine](#), identifying veterans and other volunteers with useful skills and connecting them with donors who buy gear and airline tickets.

"It was very quickly overwhelming, almost too many people wanted to help," he said. In the past week, he said he has worked to sift those with valuable combat or medical skills from people he described as "combat tourists, who don't have the correct experience and would not be an asset."

He said his group has also had to comb out a number of extremists.

Fund-raising sites such as GoFundMe have rules against collecting money for armed conflict, so Mr. Ribardo said his group and others have been careful to avoid specifically directing anyone to get involved in the fighting. Rather, he said, he simply connects those he has vetted with people who want to donate plane tickets and nonlethal supplies, describing his role as being "a Tinder for veterans and donors."

A number of mainstream media outlets, including Military Times and Time, have published step-by-step guides on joining the military in Ukraine. The Ukrainian government instructed interested volunteers to contact its consulates this week.

Several veterans who contacted the consulates this week said they were still waiting for a response, and believed staff members were overwhelmed.

On Thursday, Mr. Zelensky claimed in a video [on Telegram](#) that 16,000 volunteers had joined the international brigade, though it is unclear what the true number is. The New York Times was not able to identify any veterans actively fighting in Ukraine.

The outpouring of support is driven, veterans said, by past experiences. Some want to try to recapture the intense clarity and purpose they felt in war, which is often missing in modern suburban life. Others want a chance to make amends for failed missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and see the fight to defend a democracy against a totalitarian invader as the reason they joined the military.

To an extent not seen in past conflicts, the impulse to join has been fueled partly by an increasingly connected world. Americans watching real-time video in Ukraine can, with a click, connect to like-minded volunteers around the globe. A veteran in Phoenix can find a donor in London with unused airline miles, a driver in Warsaw offering a free ride to the border and a local to stay with in Ukraine.

Of course, war is rarely as straightforward as the deeply felt idealism that drives people to enlist. And volunteers risk not only their own lives, but also drawing the United States into a direct conflict with Russia.

“War is an unpredictable animal, and once you let it out, no one — no one — knows what will happen,” said Daniel Gale, who lost a leg in Iraq before going on to teach leadership for several years at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and retiring as a lieutenant colonel. He said he understood the urge to fight but said the risk of escalation resulting in nuclear war was too great.

“I just feel heartsick,” he said. “War is terrible and the innocent always suffer most.”

The risk of unintended escalation has led the U.S. federal government to try to keep citizens from becoming freelance fighters, not just in this conflict, but for centuries. In 1793, President Washington issued a [Proclamation of Neutrality](#) warning Americans to stay out of the French Revolution. But the efforts have been uneven, and often swayed by the larger national sentiment. So over the generations a steady stream of idealists, romantics, mercenaries and filibusters have taken up arms, — riding with Pancho Villa in Mexico, ferrying arms to Cuba, battling [communists in Africa](#) and even trying to establish [new slave states](#) in Central America.

The civil war in Spain just before the start of World War II is the best-known example. More than 3,000 Americans joined what became known as the [Lincoln-Washington Battalion](#), to fight with the elected leftist government against fascist forces.

At the time, the United States wanted to avoid war with Europe, and stayed neutral, but the Young Communist League rented billboards to recruit fighters, and members of the establishment held fundraisers to send young men overseas.

That effort, now often romanticized as a valiant prelude to the fight against the Nazis, ended badly. The poorly trained and equipped brigades made a disastrous assault of a fortified ridge in 1937 and [three-quarters of the men](#) were killed or wounded. Others faced near starvation in captivity. Their leader, a former math professor who was the inspiration for the protagonist in Ernest Hemingway’s novel “[For Whom the Bell Tolls](#)” was later captured and most [likely executed](#).

On Thursday, the Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, Igor Konashenkov, [told the Russian News Agency](#) that foreign fighters would not be considered soldiers, but mercenaries, and would not be protected under humanitarian rules regarding the treatment of prisoners of war.

“At best, they can expect to be prosecuted as criminals,” Mr. Konashenkov said. We are urging all foreign citizens who may have plans to go and fight for Kyiv’s nationalist regime to think a dozen times before getting on the way.”

Despite the risks — both individual and strategic — the United States government has so far been measured in its warnings. Asked during a news conference this week what he would tell Americans who want to fight in Ukraine, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken pointed to official statements, first issued weeks ago, imploring U.S. citizens in the country to depart immediately.

He said: “For those who want to help Ukraine and help its people, there are many ways to do that, including by supporting and helping the many NGOs that are working to provide humanitarian assistance; providing resources themselves to groups that are trying to help Ukraine by being advocates for Ukraine and for peaceful resolution to this crisis that was created by Russia.”

That has not dissuaded a number of veterans who are all too familiar with the risks of combat.

James was a medic who first saw combat when he replaced another medic killed in fighting in Iraq in 2006. He did two more tours, in Iraq and Afghanistan, seeing so much blood and death that 10 years after leaving the military he still attends therapy at a veteran's hospital.

But this week, as he watched Russian forces shell cities across Ukraine, he decided that he had to try to go there to help.

"Combat has a cost, that's for sure; you think you can come back from war the same, but you can't," James said in a phone interview from his home in Dallas, where he said he was waiting to hear back from Ukrainian officials. "But I feel obligated. It's the innocent people being attacked — the kids. It's the kids, man. I just can't stand by."

Chase, a graduate student in Virginia, said that he volunteered to fight the Islamic State in Syria in 2019 and felt the same urgency for Ukraine, but he warned against simply going to the border without a plan.

In Syria, he said he knew well-meaning volunteers who were detained for weeks by local Kurdish authorities because they arrived unannounced. He arranged with Kurdish defense forces before arriving in Syria. There he spent months as a humble foot soldier with little pay and only basic rations.

Tactically, as an inexperienced grunt, he said, he was of little value. But to the people of northeastern Syria, he was a powerful symbol that the world was with them.

"I was a sign to them that the world was watching and they mattered," he said.

A few months into his time in Syria, he was shot in the leg, and eventually returned to the United States. He came home and worked for a septic tank company, then got a job writing about used cars. When he saw explosions hitting Ukraine this week, the part of him that went to war three years ago reawakened.

"Everything here is just kind of empty and it doesn't seem like I'm doing anything important," he said in an interview from an extended-stay hotel in Virginia where he is living. "So I am trying to go. I don't think I have a choice. You have to draw the line."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Lviv becomes a vital rear base Ukraine west
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/world/europe/lviv-ukraine-war-russia.html
GIST	<p>LVIV, Ukraine — Municipal workers were wrapping statues in protective coverings and boarding up the stained-glass windows of the many churches that fill this historic European city in western Ukraine, as the population readied for war.</p> <p>The city of Lviv, no more than 50 miles from the border with Poland, has been spared any direct attack so far in the first 10 days of Russia's invasion. But it is rapidly becoming an important rear base — channeling supplies and men to the frontline cities and supporting hundreds of thousands of people fleeing the other way.</p> <p>This genteel city of cobbled streets and Austro-Hungarian architecture — a UNESCO world heritage site — has already become home for foreign embassies and government departments relocated from the capital, Kyiv, and is the main route in for medicines, equipment and personnel. According to Western intelligence analysts, foreign-supplied weapons are also being brought through this region across the land border with Poland.</p> <p>"The Lviv region is a live corridor," said Oksana Yarynets, 44, an economics professor and former member of Parliament who was organizing supplies and medical training for volunteers at a center for army veterans in the city.</p>

The region has five border crossings into the neighboring countries of Poland, Slovakia and Romania, and one through the Carpathian Mountains, she said. "It's the only point of supply and also the way the refugees can evacuate through."

Lviv's train station is clogged with thousands of people waiting for the four trains a day that still ply the route to Poland, and cars packed with families tail back for almost 10 miles at the main land crossing at Medyka.

Officials were bracing for tens of thousands more refugees expected to arrive Friday from a mass exodus from the capital, Kyiv, amid what refugee officials say is already the largest movement of refugees within Europe since World War II.

"We will have a humanitarian crisis in Lviv tonight," warned Viktoria Khrystenکو, a lawmaker on the City Council who is helping direct the effort to support refugees. "We had 30,000 people arrive last night," she said. "Tonight we will have 100,000." There are not enough places to sleep, food to distribute and shelter for the crowds, she said.

Yet as people flee, others are returning and regrouping. Volunteers were loading boxes of supplies onto a train heading back east to Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, which has suffered heavy Russian bombardment for days. Groups of men in woolen hats and winter jackets were boarding the train, too. They had left jobs in Europe to come back and enlist in the fight, from Prague, Berlin and Warsaw, one said.

"We are at war and someone has to defend the country," said Artem Sypii, 41, a welder who had traveled back from Poland and was heading home to eastern Ukraine.

Lviv has so far escaped attack because Russian forces are focusing their attention for now on the largest and most strategic cities, including the capital, Kyiv. But Western and Ukrainian officials say the Russians made an attempt in the first hours of the invasion to drop paratroopers into the woods outside the city. A firefight ensued that thwarted the attempt, the city's mayor, Andriy Sadovyy, said in an interview.

The deployment of paratroopers is a recognition of the importance of Lviv not only as a supply route and rear base, but as a cultural and spiritual center of Ukrainian resistance, especially if the capital, Kyiv, is encircled and cut off.

"Kyiv is the heart of Ukraine, Lviv is the soul," the mayor said, using a phrase that many inhabitants repeat.

"We are the diplomatic capital of Ukraine right now," he said. "And a lot of government agencies have their headquarters here right now because they moved here to have adequate accommodation, and so all the government systems are in operation despite the bombardment."

Lviv has its own singular history that both separates it from the rest of Ukraine and inspires the nation. It is in a largely agricultural region where the people are more conservative, close to nature, and, according to Soviet stereotypes, seen as less sophisticated than those in the more industrialized eastern part of the country, said Bohdan Shumylovych, a professor of Cultural Studies at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv.

For 200 years of its recent history until 1939, Lviv was a separate state from the rest of the country, first as part of the Hapsburg monarchy and later as part of Poland, Oleksandr Zaitsev, a professor of contemporary history of Ukraine at the same establishment, wrote in an electronic message.

"Besides, Lviv was the center of the Greek Catholic Church, founded in the late 16th century, while most Ukrainians living in the Russian Empire were Orthodox."

And because Lviv and western Ukraine only came under Moscow's rule after World War II, it spent a shorter time under Russian and Soviet influence. Ukrainian is much more widely spoken in the western regions than elsewhere, and Lviv was often in the forefront of the Ukrainian national movement, including during the breakup of the Soviet Union.

"Even in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a strong anti-Soviet sentiment in Lviv," Mr. Zaitsev wrote. "That is why, in 1990-1991, Lviv residents were among the strongest supporters of Ukraine's separation from the U.S.S.R."

That spirit of resistance is now everywhere in Ukraine, and while Kyiv is the center of the resistance today, historians and politicians said, the inhabitants of Lviv remain proud of their reputations as nationalist leaders.

Former members of a militia group, who ran security and medical evacuations when fighting broke out in eastern Ukraine in 2014, were reorganizing this week in a private school in the city. Their motto, "Slaves are not taken to heaven," was that of a legendary Cossack leader.

Their guards were out on the first night of the war helping defend the airport, said Ivan Sprynskyi, a lawyer who heads the organization. "Now we are organizing people from abroad and getting those who want to go closer to the front."

The Ukrainian army is better trained and equipped than when the fighting first broke out seven years ago, but their members were supporting them, a veteran of the group said.

"We are here but lots of our brothers are in spots all over Ukraine," he said, giving only his first name and military nickname, Ihor "Sava."

A former military engineer from Cleveland, Ihor Koval, said he had already set up a website to help fund raise and bring in nonlethal equipment to help equip new recruits. Two women inside the office were helping with logistics for people volunteering from abroad.

Across town men lined up outside a hunting shop to purchase rifles. And, at a military school, hundreds of men were registering to join the territorial defense force Friday morning. As an air raid siren sounded, noncommissioned army officers led groups of recruits into the basement to demonstrate how to dismantle and operate a Kalashnikov assault rifle.

Artists, designers and software developers were among those signing up.

"I think we must, so that we are one people," said Demyan Voytovych, 42, a designer. "They are already fighting in Kyiv and Kharkiv, so this will show our unity and our strength to the world."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Australia east coast reels from worst floods
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/mar/04/heartbreaking-australias-east-coast-reels-from-worst-floods-in-living-memory
GIST	<p>When Jenni Metcalfe returned to her Brisbane home to survey the damage as the nearby river peaked, water had already risen a metre up the back wall. There was nothing she could do. "I sat in the gutter and watched it and cried," she said.</p> <p>The east coast of Australia has been battered by more than a week of torrential rain, as communities begin to survey the wreckage of fatal flash flooding that has left townships looking like war zones.</p> <p>South-east Queensland and the north coast of New South Wales have borne the brunt of the "one in-1,000 year" catastrophic weather conditions, which have claimed at least 17 lives.</p>

Residents in the regional city of Lismore in north-eastern NSW are still reeling from the worst flooding in its history, which sent huge areas of the regional city [underwater](#) with the cleanup likely to last months, if not years.

More than 700mm of rain fell in just 30 hours during the worst of the floods on Monday, forcing 43,000 residents to scramble onto their rooftops and wait to be rescued by emergency services crews.

Four of the dead were in Lismore, people who were trapped in flooded homes or swept away while trying to escape. A number of the city's residents remained missing.

Among the devastation have been stories of heroism and kinship.

World championship surfers Mick Fanning and Joel Parkinson spent Tuesday [ferrying stranded residents](#) and distributing supplies on their jet skis at badly hit Tumbulgum on the north coast of NSW.

Emergency services volunteers saved [dozens of elderly](#) trapped in their homes and facilities, using boogie boards and dinghies to pull residents through windows and ferry them to safety.

Others spent hours locating and mustering hundreds of livestock that were swept away in flood waters causing devastating losses for farmers already hit by drought and past flooding events. If lucky, the occasional cow turned up on beaches or rooftops.

As the cleanup in Lismore began on Thursday, a harsh sun strengthened the stench of mud and sewage on the main street as business owners returned to their ruined shops where flood waters had crept up to the ceiling.

Mark Bailey was one of them, forced to wade through a pile of ruined goods and furniture he estimated was worth \$5m amassed at the front of his collectibles store, The Penny Man.

"Everything in there's ****ed," he told Guardian Australia, holding an album of vintage East German stamps that were dripping brown and unsalvageable.

"I'm not mad at anyone in particular, every shop has a different story along here," he said. "We won't be reopening here, and I would be surprised if half of the street ever does."

Many businesses that went underwater, including Bailey's, were uninsurable given their proximity to riverbanks and flood-prone areas.

The cleanup had barely begun in large parts of south-east Queensland when residents were again forced to take cover due to more storms.

The "rain bomb" that battered the capital city of Brisbane and surrounds until Monday killed 10 people and damaged more than 17,000 homes and businesses. Some 739mm of rain fell in just four days – nearly 75% of the annual average.

On Friday, all schools in south-east Queensland closed except for children of essential workers in anticipation of further "extremely unstable" storms.

That the floods hit the same week the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its latest report on the climate crisis, warning extreme weather events including floods were wreaking increasing damage, did not go unnoticed.

The Queensland premier, Annastacia Palaszczuk, warned Queenslanders were living through "unprecedented times", a sentiment echoed by the NSW premier, Dominic Perrottet.

"I've lived in Brisbane essentially all my life and I haven't seen storms and floods like this all being thrown at us at once," she said.

While flood waters in some parts of the country begin to recede, many Australians brace for another wave of water as the storm regroupes and moves south towards Sydney. A sense of frustration and fatigue has set in.

Some, like property owners in the lowlands of Richmond, north-west of Sydney, are still rebuilding from the last catastrophic floods that struck in March 2021. Many have yet to receive promised government assistance.

Pharmacist Skye Swift, who made headlines when Fanning ferried her to her chemist shop to distribute essential medicines to her community, is exhausted reflecting on the road to come.

Telecommunications outages were hampering the recovery effort, and supermarkets were grappling with potential weeks-long shortages of fresh produce amid a burgeoning supply crisis.

Swift told Guardian Australia the good news stories, the solidarity, was "beautiful, but not enough at the end of the day".

"We've now got weeks and months of rebuilding," she said. "And how do you rebuild when you don't have any money, a job?"

"It's the aftermath that gets missed, that's the heartbreaking part ... it's going to be a long road."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Russia oligarchs in sanctions crosshairs
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/04/meet-the-oligarchs-sanctions-russian-billionaires
GIST	<p>For a growing number of Russia's richest and most powerful men, now would be a very bad time to take their private jets and superyachts to their mansions in the United States.</p> <p>Yesterday, the White House announced it would expand the list of Russian oligarchs subject to full blocking sanctions – the highest level of restrictions – as it ramps up punishment against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. Some of the newly named oligarchs overlapped with a list of Russian elites on whom the European Union imposed sanctions earlier this week, although there were some notable differences.</p> <p>The federal government won't just stop at freezing these targets' assets, but will seize them, Joe Biden announced in his State of the Union address on Tuesday.</p> <p>In charge of appropriating these assets will be KleptoCapture, a newly announced justice department taskforce, with support from the treasury department, FBI, IRS and other federal agencies. Under US law, the justice department may use civil forfeiture to confiscate the proceeds from foreign crimes, including corruption, when they are found in the United States.</p> <p>Their efforts will complement those of a transatlantic taskforce announced over the weekend between the United States, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada and the European Commission.</p> <p>"We are joining with our European allies to find and seize your yachts, your luxury apartments, your private jets. We are coming for your ill-begotten gains," Biden said.</p> <p>The Feds may have their work cut out. US regulations are lax when it comes to requiring disclosures of real estate transactions by foreign individuals, making the country a prime destination for Russian's uber-rich looking to snap up prime properties without scrutiny.</p>

Other favorite toys of oligarchs like planes and boats are commonly registered through shell companies. And many of those luxury craft have begun traveling toward extradition-free territories such as the Maldives, [according to Bloomberg News](#).

Here's an introduction to the Russian oligarchs now joining the US sanctions list – as well as a few others who haven't been targeted yet, but have notable US ties.

Alisher Usmanov

Russians know Alisher Usmanov as one of Vladimir Putin's "favorite" oligarchs. The country's richest man until 2015, Usmanov owns a majority stake in Russia's second-largest phone network, MegFon, and a large stake in the iron and steel giant Metalloinvest.

But few Americans know that Usmanov also helped give us Facebook. The billionaire began investing in the social network in 2009, when Zuckerberg's firm was having trouble accessing funding in the wake of the financial crisis. Usmanov ultimately poured [over \\$900m](#) into the firm, owning as much as 10% of the company before selling his stake in 2014 and netting himself billions. He was also a major investor in Apple, Twitter, LinkedIn, Groupon and Zynga.

Usmanov was subjected to sanctions by the EU on Monday, and on Wednesday [German authorities seized his \\$600m megayacht](#), the Dilbar – which boasts the world's largest yacht-based indoor swimming pool. On 3 March he was among those added to the sanctions list by the US. The oligarch still has a \$200m private Airbus A340.

The Rotenbergs

Long before brothers Arkady and Boris Rotenberg became two of Russia's wealthiest tycoons, they were teenage Vladimir Putin's judo training buddies, a role they continued into adulthood. Clearly they were good at it, because after Putin became president he rewarded the brothers with the control of large state-owned enterprises and lucrative contracts, netting them a massive fortune.

The Rotenbergs have since built a huge family empire of international investments under a web of shell companies, which has made Arkady's son Igor a billionaire in his own right. Despite Arkady and Boris getting US sanctions after Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea, the brothers "continued actively participating in the US art market by purchasing over \$18 million in art in the months following the imposition of sanctions", according to a [US Senate report](#). Rotenberg-linked shell companies continued making transactions in the US financial system worth over \$91m long after the sanctions, according to the report.

In addition to Arkady and Boris, Igor and five additional family members were added to the US sanctions list this week.

Igor Shuvalov

Russia's deputy prime minister from 2008 to 2018, Igor Shuvalov is now the chairman of VEB, the Russian development bank that finances major infrastructure projects, including the Sochi Olympics. He has claimed to be one of Russia's cleanest officials, telling media he transferred all his wealth to Russia in 2013, and only kept it offshore before that [to avoid spoiling his kids](#). But an investigation by the anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny found that Shuvalov, through a shell company, bought two London luxury apartments in 2014 for \$11.4m and has used a secret private jet to [fly his wife's corgis](#) around the world because, as one of his staffers explained, "it's not that comfortable in business class".

He won't be able to fly his corgis as many places now that he's on the US and EU's sanctions lists.

Yevgeniy Prigozhin

Legend has it Yevgeniy Prigozhin began his rise to power [selling hot dogs](#), shortly after getting released from prison for robbery. The wiener venture was apparently a smash hit, and within years he had opened high-end restaurants that counted Russia's leader among their clientele, earning him the nickname of "Putin's chef" and catapulting him into the inner circles of Russia's elite.

Americans might be more familiar with another one of Prigozhin's businesses: the Internet Research Agency, which employed a troll army that began by supporting Russia's 2014 invasion of Crimea, before turning its efforts to [influencing the 2016 US presidential election](#) in favor of Donald Trump. Prigozhin and the Internet Research Agency were indicted by a US grand jury in 2018 for interfering with the election, and he was added to an FBI wanted list in 2021.

He's now on both the US and EU sanctions lists for running disinformation campaigns to support Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Sergey Chemezov

A former KGB officer who befriended Vladimir Putin in the 1980s while living in the same apartment building, Sergey Chemezov rose through Russia's public and private sector in Putin's wake, and in 2007 was appointed as CEO of Russia's state-owned defense giant Rostec, a position he still holds today. Chemezov was sanctioned by the US in 2014 amid Rostec's role as a supplier for Russia's invasion of Crimea, and Washington is targeting him again, now with his family members.

According to investigative reports and allegations from the jailed activist Alexei Navalny, Chemezov's relatives have used shell companies to accumulate [eye-watering assets](#), including superyachts and luxury villas around the world. But Chemezov says he's clean, telling Russian media in 2019: "I do not accumulate wealth. I don't stuff money in the corners. I don't have yachts or airplanes."

Nikolai Tokarev

Another former KGB officer who served alongside Putin and Chemezov, Nikolai Tokarev took over former Soviet state assets as Putin built his political power, and in 2007 became the head of the state-controlled oil giant Transneft. The oligarch has used his position at Transneft to build a business and real estate empire, which reportedly includes sponsoring an [extremely fancy palace](#) that's said to be personally used by Putin. Tokarev was hit by US and EU sanctions this week.

Vladimir Potanin

Reportedly the second richest man in Russia, the banker, metals mining tycoon and former deputy prime minister Vladimir Potanin was among a small circle of oligarchs who met with Putin last week as the invasion of Ukraine began.

Potanin has played a big role in American arts: he has been a board member of New York's Guggenheim Museum for two decades, until he [stepped down](#) on Wednesday. He has also given millions to the Kennedy Center in Washington, which carved his name into a wall. He is also known to have [owned property in New York City](#), which came to light during a divorce fight that could cost him \$7bn.

Potanin isn't currently under US sanctions, which is good news for his three megayachts and two private jets (that we know about).

Leonid Mikhelson

Russia's richest man in 2016, Leonid Mikhelson is the founder and chairman of natural gas producer Novatek, a close friend of Putin's, and a business partner of Gennady Timchenko, a billionaire who has been under US sanctions since 2014.

Mikhelson loves art: along with his \$200m art collection, he joined the board of trustees at New York's New Museum [in 2013](#), and has sponsored exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago and London's Tate Modern. His ostentatious superyacht, the Pacific, can reportedly accommodate two helicopters.

But his other assets may be harder to trace. In 2017, the Panama Papers revealed that Mikhelson had used an [intricate system of shell companies](#) to secretly register a \$65m Gulfstream private jet in the United States, which in most cases requires US citizenship or permanent residency.

The tycoon is not currently subject to sanctions, though his company Novatek is.

Petr Aven

Petr Aven is the head of Alfa Group, a commercial bank subject to US sanctions that helped him amass an estimated \$5.5bn fortune. A well-known collector of classical Russian paintings, Aven has lent works from his collection – reportedly worth \$200m – to New York’s Museum of Modern Art and the Neue Galerie. Aven reportedly has never bought a plane or yacht, and [told the FT](#) “all my money goes in to art.” That is, of course, if you don’t count the millions he spent transforming an 8.5-acre plot in England into a [“KGB-proof” mansion](#), complete with a bomb-proof panic room.

Last year, Aven filed a libel lawsuit against HarperCollins for a book it published about Vladimir Putin’s rise, Putin’s People.

Aven was sanctioned on Monday by the EU, which described him as “one of Vladimir Putin’s closest oligarchs” and one of “approximately 50 wealthy Russian businessmen who regularly meet with Vladimir Putin in the Kremlin”. He has not yet been placed under sanctions by the US or UK.

Mikhail Fridman

Petr Aven’s business partner, Mikhail Fridman, is Alfa Group’s founder and a Ukrainian-born Russian oligarch. Fridman has made substantial investments in the United States, which include spending a [reported \\$1bn](#) in 2011 to buy up distressed properties across the east coast, telling the Wall Street Journal at the time, “The American market is the most well-regulated and liquid market in the world. It has the best protection for investor rights.”

Through Fridman’s investment group, LetterOne, the billionaire also sank [\\$200m into Uber](#), and \$50m into the telecom startup FreedomPop. Fridman also [caused a stir in 2018](#) when he spoke alongside Aven at a closed-door dinner hosted by the Atlantic Council, a major US foreign policy thinktank, in what critics saw as an unofficial Kremlin mission to protest against US sanctions.

Last week, Fridman became one of the first oligarchs to [speak out](#) against the invasion of Ukraine, calling it a “tragedy” and writing that “war can never be the answer.” Nonetheless, Fridman was subjected to sanctions on Monday by the EU, which named him as “a top Russian financier and enabler of Putin’s inner circle”. Like Aven, he has not yet been placed under sanctions by the US or UK.

The oligarch has a son, Alexander, who is reportedly attending NYU’s Stern business school, after a [stint in Moscow selling hookah](#).

Alexei Mordashov

Currently Russia’s richest man, Alexei Mordashov owns a third of Tui, Europe’s biggest tourism firm, and gained his billions as the chief executive of Russia’s largest steel and mining firm, Severstal. He is also a large shareholder of the Bank of Rossiya, which has opened up branches across Russia-occupied Ukrainian territory in recent years.

Over the last two decades, the billionaire has also poured money into the United States, investing heavily through Severstal in steel companies in the midwest before [selling them for \\$2.3bn](#) in 2014.

Mordashov has been hit with sanctions by the EU, but the US hasn’t taken action yet. They would be interested in his Bombardier Global 6000 private jet and multiple superyachts, including the \$500m Nord, which Senator Bernie Sanders noted on Tuesday had been “sailing in the Seychelles region for more than 10 days” in a [Twitter thread](#) about Russian offshore wealth.

Roman Abramovich

Roman Abramovich, the longtime owner of Chelsea FC, has been described by a member of the UK parliament as a [“key enabler”](#) of Putin’s regime, which Abramovich has long denied. An orphan raised by his grandparents in Siberia, Abramovich pulled himself up by his bootstraps the old-fashioned way: wriggling into the inner circles of government and then profiting hugely by selling previously state-owned assets that he acquired after the fall of the Soviet Union.

	<p>The billionaire owns one of the world’s most outlandish yachts, complete with an onboard submarine and three helicopters. He has also owned a number of ultra-expensive properties in the United States, including a trio of buildings in New York City’s Upper East Side worth more than \$90m combined, which he transferred to his third wife, Darya Zhukova, in 2018.</p> <p>Abramovich is not currently under western sanctions. Earlier, the British prime minister, Boris Johnson, told the House of Commons that Abramovich was “already facing sanctions” though later said he “misspoke”.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Putin morphs into hero white nationalists
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/05/putin-ukraine-invasion-white-nationalists-far-right
GIST	<p>“Can we get a round of applause for Russia?” asked Nick Fuentes, on stage last week at a white nationalist event. Amid a roar of applause for the Russian president, just days after he invaded Ukraine, many attendees responded by shouting: “Putin! Putin!”</p> <p>It would be easy to dismiss the America First Political Action Conference (AFPAC) in Orlando, Florida, as a radical fringe. But speeches by two Republican members of Congress – one in person, the other via video – guaranteed national attention and controversy.</p> <p>The backlash showed how the war in Ukraine has exposed the American far right’s affinity with Putin. That affinity is complicated by the tortured relationship between Russia and former president Donald Trump, whose rise Moscow supported with a covert operation to undermine US democracy.</p> <p>Fuentes, a notorious antisemite, created AFPAC to coincide with the more mainstream Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), where Trump was the headline speaker last Saturday.</p> <p>At AFPAC, Fuentes introduced the Georgia congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, who would this week interrupt the State of the Union address, rising to yell “Build the wall!” as an objection to Joe Biden’s immigration policy. But here she did not interrupt to object to the chanting of the Russian president’s name.</p> <p>“I don’t believe anyone should be canceled,” Taylor Greene told the attendees of the white nationalist conference. She lashed out at a wide range of topics from Marxism to cancel culture but avoided the invasion of Ukraine, saying even less on the topic than Russian state media.</p> <p>Devin Burghart, executive director of Institute for Research & Education on Human Rights, said: “In the world of the white nationalists, you are seeing a lot of support for Putin, as expressed by the cheerleading at AFPAC over the weekend.”</p> <p>Others agree, pointing to a shared socially and culturally conservative ideology, disdain for democratic systems and appreciation for a “strong man” form of government. There was also the fact that it was the current Ukrainian government whom Trump attempted – and failed – to bribe to investigate his political rival Biden: actions which led to his first impeachment.</p> <p>Jared Holt, a domestic extremism researcher with the Atlantic Council’s Digital Forensic Research Lab, said: “When Russia invaded Ukraine, large parts of the far right were supportive.”</p> <p>“The common thread is this idea that because of western European and US influence on Ukraine, Ukraine was a place where the same perceived downfalls of western society existed and Putin embodying a strong man authoritarian-type figure stepping in and inflicting suffering on Ukraine was viewed in a positive light.”</p> <p>Fuentes is certainly the real deal of white nationalism. He attended the deadly “Unite The Right” rally in 2017 and was recently subpoenaed over his involvement in the pro-Trump insurrection on January 6 2021.</p>

He now carries on that effort with AFPAC, aiming to create a kind of far-right archipelago by bringing together white nationalists, fascists and Trumpist crowds talking only to each other in their own islands.

The three-year-old conference sees itself as part enfant terrible, piquing the genteel wing of the Republican party, and part Weimar-era beer hall organizing before the putsch. It is far right, but no longer on the fringe of Republican politics.

Taylor Greene was condemned by some in her own party for speaking at AFPAC but is unlikely to be disciplined. And she was not alone. The Arizona congressman Paul Gosar made a video address. A lieutenant governor from Idaho and state legislator from Arizona also spoke at the event, which also attracted figures such as Gavin McInnes, the founder of the violent extremist gang the Proud Boys, which currently has more than three dozen members under indictment for the insurrection.

This represents a disorienting shift for a Republican party once staunchly opposed to communism and the Soviet Union, which President Ronald Reagan dubbed “the evil empire”. But Trump, who in 2015 ran for president promising to build a wall and impose a Muslim ban, stoked the party’s nativist elements.

And as America and the world grow more diverse, critics say, Russia has come to be seen as a beacon of salvation by white nationalists. In 2004 David Duke, a longtime leader of the Ku Klux Klan, described it as “key to white survival”. In 2017 Ann Coulter, a rightwing author and commentator, opined: “In 20 years, Russia will be the only country that is recognizably European.”

Researchers who monitor far-right groups agree that the moment of Putin enthusiasm in the US has intellectual underpinnings with deeper roots. Burghart said: “For almost a decade the work of Russian fascist Alexander Dugin has found a home in American white nationalist circles.”

Dugin’s ideology is steeped in Russian Christian nationalism and has chimed with Putin’s world view. At the same time, it echoes much of the Christian nationalist activism in the US, where liberal values, gay rights and a desire to keep religion out of the state, are seen as decadent and responsible for American decline.

Burghart added: “There’s an attraction to Putin’s hardline authoritarian stand, his aggressive policies, they are attracted to his brand of traditional Christianity that Putin’s expressed. Some have liked Putin’s attacks on the Russian LGBTQ+ community.”

On the eve of the Russian invasion, former Trump aide Steve Bannon hosted private security head Erik Princ, founder of the Blackwater military contracting group, on his popular War Room podcast. The two men – who are highly influential in Trumpist circles – praised Putin as “anti-woke”.

Bannon declared: “Putin ain’t woke.” Attacks on wokeness were also a constant thread running through CPAC, which this year had the official slogan: “Awake not woke.”

The legacy of the Trump years shapes the perception of Putin among the right in the US as Trump demonstrated a clear affinity for the Russian leader, even as details emerged of the Russian attempt in the 2016 election to disrupt US democracy. Trump himself praised Putin as “genius” and “smart” as the invasion began only to change his tune later as the military action faltered and casualties mounted.

Even then, while condemning the assault, Trump told CPAC: “The problem is not that Putin is smart – which of course he’s smart – but the real problem is that our leaders are dumb.”

The same was true of America’s most popular conservative broadcaster, Fox News’ Tucker Carlson. Right up to the invasion Carlson was lambasting Ukraine as “not a democracy” and a puppet state of the US state department. He also praised Putin, saying: “Has Putin ever called me a racist? Has he threatened to get me fired for disagreeing with him? Has he shipped every middle-class job in my town to Russia?”

	<p>That sort of language – contrasting Putin favorably against Democrats on mainstream US television – has an impact.</p> <p>Burghart commented: “After four years of praise for the Russian leader there’s a large swath of the right that has internalized that message. Some of the right have embraced Putin while others have been slow to denounce the invasion of Ukraine.”</p> <p>Burghart says some extremist rightwing militias even see Ukraine as a potential scenario to discuss how to prepare for urban warfare and a future insurgency in the US itself. Instead of horror at the outbreak of brutal urban warfare, some US extremists are obsessed with the idea of a coming civil war in America.</p> <p>“They see a societal collapse and need to prepare for an impending civil war, and their focus is on preparing for the battles of that here in the US,” Burgheart added.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/04 Russia tactics lay waste Ukraine towns
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/04/ninety-per-cent-of-houses-are-damaged-thousands-trapped-in-ukraines-small-towns
GIST	<p>Happiness lies in ruins. This small town – Schastia in Ukrainian – has been out of the headlines since Moscow took its brutal war against civilians to the country’s biggest cities.</p> <p>But it is here, and in nearby Volnovakha, that the illegal tactics of terrorising civilians for military aims, honed in Syria and then brought back so close to home, have reached a grim high point.</p> <p>There have been terrible strikes on homes, schools and hospitals around Ukraine. But residents of both towns say the barrage of shelling, rocket assaults and airstrikes since the start of the war has damaged or destroyed nearly every building in their towns, a comprehensive devastation as yet unmatched elsewhere.</p> <p>The Russian flag has now been raised over the ruins of Schastia. In Volnovakha, the attack is still so intense that dead bodies lie uncollected, says local MP Dmytro Lubinets. Ukrainians still brave enough to run rescue missions are going back only for the living.</p> <p>Thousands of them are trapped in basements, with dwindling supplies of food and water, sheltering from an apparently senseless attack on a town Lubinets says has no military defenders in its centre. The line of contact is 20km away, he says.</p> <p>“It never stops, every five minutes there is a mortar landing or artillery shells, some buildings have been hit by multiple rocket systems,” he said by phone.</p> <p>“In the city there is not any building which has not suffered from direct or collateral damage. So some buildings have major destruction, some minor destruction, some are completely destroyed to the ground.”</p> <p>On Friday morning, Ukrainian media claimed that a Russian war plane bombing “residential areas and civilian infrastructure” in the area was shot down.</p> <p>Pavlo*, a Schastia native who evacuated his family, said 80% of the town was damaged in an intense bombardment that lasted days, and as in Volnovakha, barely any buildings were entirely untouched.</p> <p>“People started evacuation after three days, when Russian forces stopped bombing the town and people could leave the shelters,” he said. “People didn’t have water, gas, electricity for three or four days because of the bombing. They used all kinds of their weapons, Grad rockets, artillery and mines.”</p> <p>The devastation in larger cities such as Chernihiv and Kharkiv is deadly and terrible, but has still affected only a relatively small portion of the towns, even if the terror it instils casts a shadow over every civilian still trapped there.</p>

But what Russian forces appear to show in these smaller towns is that they are willing to leave behind them a wasteland on a massive scale, as they did in Grozny in Chechnya, or – together with Syrian forces – in the ancient city of Aleppo. Neither humanity nor heritage stopped them.

Attacking civilians, and the infrastructure that supports life including hospitals and schools, is illegal under international law. It has no direct strategic advantage for an advancing army. But it is extremely effective at breaking morale of a resisting population.

The “I love Volnovakha” sign in the centre of town, which has survived somehow, has a backdrop of ruined houses. It appears at the start of a video, filmed from a moving car, which captures crumpled shops, buildings blackened by fire, and a road strewn with debris.

Before the war, the population of the town was 25,000. Lubinets says at least 3,000 people are trapped, but possibly many more. Hundreds of them are children. Requests for a humanitarian evacuation corridor have gone unanswered, so the military and other volunteers are risking their lives to bring people out in small groups.

“We drive under fire to the places where people mostly concentrated, schools, hospitals, grab them out, put them in the car and bring them out, because the shelling never stops at any second,” he said.

“Its impossible to use buses because they have low mobility. Always when you go there you will get punctures, so you just have to drive [the car] out for about 10 minutes to places where big buses can come.”

For many residents of these towns, their lives are as irreparably shattered as their homes, barely a week into this war. Their suffering may be a terrible template for the damage Russia will inflict on others, if Moscow tries to pound bigger towns and cities into submission.

“There was life before, and life after, and now I just feel emptiness inside,” said Iyrna*, who fled in a long, lonely journey through a succession of towns and cities under attack – first Chernihiv, then Kyiv and finally to relative safety in the western city of Lviv. “Nobody knows what is going on there.”

“A friend [still in Schastia] told me: ‘I can’t even go to your place to try and collect some papers, or other things, everything there is totally smashed up,’” she said. “Ninety per cent of houses are damaged.”

She was just out of hospital after major surgery when the war began, and her husband is serving on the frontline. “For three days I was in such deep stress I couldn’t eat or drink, even now they have been swept out of my memory. I was so exhausted I had hallucinations that my husband was with me.”

Schastia and Volnovakha were on the frontline for eight years of the smaller-scale war between Ukrainian forces and pro-Russia separatists, and Lubinets believes the carnage inflicted on the towns now is revenge for their resilience through those years.

“From the very first day of the war they started shelling us directly ... They are trying to wipe out the town,” he said. “I think someone in Russia is destroying [the town] as a reminder of what they can do to someone who doesn’t break in the face of Russian aggression.”

* Name has been changed to protect family members in areas under Russian control

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Day 10 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/05/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-ten-of-the-russian-invasion

GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia has announced a ceasefire in the cities of Volnovakha and the strategic port of Mariupol, which have been under heavy attack. On Saturday, state news agencies ran a statement from the defence force that Russian forces would stop firing at 10:00 Moscow time, to allow humanitarian corridors out of the Ukrainian cities. • There has not yet been confirmation from Ukrainian forces. It is also not clear from Russia's statement how long the corridors would stay open. • Both cities have been under heavy bombardment. The mayor of Mariupol had been pleading on Friday for humanitarian corridors to allow people to flee and bring in food and medical supplies. Mariupol has had no water, heat or electricity and is running out of food after coming under attack by Russian forces for the past five days, the mayor said. In Volnovakha, the attack has been so intense that dead bodies lie uncollected, those trapped in shelters are running out of supplies, and 90% of buildings are damaged or destroyed, local MP Dmytro Lubinets said. • Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Nato has given the "green light for further bombing of Ukraine" by ruling out a no-fly zone. Zelenskyy criticised Nato for refusing to implement a no-fly zone over Ukraine, saying "All the people who die from this day forward will also die because of you, because of your weakness, because of your lack of unity". • Nato warned on Friday that imposing a no-fly zone could provoke full-fledged war in Europe with nuclear-armed Russia. "The only way to implement a no-fly zone is to send Nato fighter planes into Ukraine's airspace, and then impose that no-fly zone by shooting down Russian planes," Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg said. Nato foreign ministers discussed a "no-fly zone" over Ukraine but agreed that Nato planes should not operate over Ukrainian airspace, Stoltenberg said. • Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, the largest of its kind in Europe, was seized by Russian forces on Friday, after an attack that started a fire close to one of its six reactors. No release of radiation was reported, but Ukrainian officials said workers had not been able to check all the safety infrastructure in the wake of the attack. • An emergency summit of the UN security council was summoned after the attack on the Zaporizhzhia power plant. The US ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the world narrowly averted a "nuclear catastrophe" and condemned Russia's actions as "reckless" and "dangerous". The US embassy in Ukraine says the attack on the nuclear plant is a war crime. • Russian president Vladimir Putin introduced a series of new laws cracking down on the free press. Putin signed a bill into law that introduces jail terms of up to 15 years for people publishing "false information" about the Russian army as Russia moves forward with its invasion of Ukraine. • Many outlets are ceasing Russian operations or removing coverage as a result. The BBC, CNN, Bloomberg and CBC have all announced they are suspending either operations or broadcasts in the country, saying the law "criminalises independent reporting in the country". Russia's Novaya Gazeta newspaper said it will remove material on Russia's military actions in Ukraine from its website. • Russian state media regulators banned access to Twitter and Facebook. Russian state media regulator Roskomnadzor has restricted access to Twitter, and the country has blocked Facebook across the country. • Putin also signed a bill that would allow fines or jail terms of up to three years for calling for sanctions against Russia. The past year has seen an increasingly harsh crackdown on independent and critical voices in Russia, that only intensified after the start of the invasion. • Seven people were killed, including two children, after a Russian airstrike hit a rural residential area in the Kyiv region on Friday, Ukrainian police said. Police said the strike hit the village of Markhalivka, about 6 miles from the south-western outskirts of the Ukrainian capital. • More than 1.2 million people have fled Ukraine into neighbouring countries since Russia launched its full-scale invasion on 24 February, the UN said, including about half a million children.
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 Ukraine: Russia fails to respect ceasefire
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/05/zelenskiy-lashes-out-at-nato-over-no-fly-zone-as-russian-attacks-intensify

GIST

Authorities in the Ukrainian port city of Mariupol said an evacuation of civilians planned for Saturday had been postponed because Russian forces encircling the city were not respecting an agreed ceasefire.

In a statement, the city council asked residents to return to shelters in the city and wait for further information on evacuation.

In a televised broadcast, Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said Russia was not observing an agreed ceasefire in some areas, preventing a joint plan to allow civilians to evacuate.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, accused the Nato alliance of bending to Russian pressure and said it was not the force that Ukrainians had previously imagined. Speaking on Ukrainian television, he said he was open to talks with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, but only if they were "meaningful".

The Russian defence ministry said its units had opened humanitarian corridors near Mariupol and Volnovakha, a much smaller city 40 miles (65km) to the north, on Saturday morning. Evacuations from Mariupol had been due to begin at 11am local time (0900 GMT).

Located on the Sea of Azov, the city of 450,000 has become the scene of growing misery amid days of shelling that has knocked out power and most phone service and raised the prospect of food and water shortages for hundreds of thousands of people in freezing weather. The city represents a potential strategic advantage for Moscow's invasion, connecting it to the Russian forces coming from annexed Crimea, as well as to the troops in the Donbas.

In Volnovakha, the attack is still so intense that dead bodies lie uncollected, those hiding in shelters are running out of food, and about 90% of the city is damaged by bombing, local MP Dmytro Lubinets said.

Before the postponement, the Ukrainian government said the plan was to evacuate about 200,000 people from Mariupol and 15,000 from Volnovakha, and that the Red Cross would act as the ceasefire's guarantor. An adviser to Ukraine's interior ministry said there would be agreements on humanitarian corridors for other cities.

Turkey said the humanitarian ceasefires declared by Russia should be countrywide and lasting. The Turkish foreign minister, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, said evacuation and aid shipment corridors must be opened across the country and that it was working to evacuate its citizens in Ukraine by bus and train.

The Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, is due to speak to Vladimir Putin by phone on Sunday. A spokesperson said Turkey was ready to help resolve the crisis.

Mariupol and Volnovakha are just two of many cities across Ukraine left reeling by a devastating campaign of shelling and artillery from Russian forces. The Russian defence ministry said on Saturday a broad offensive would continue elsewhere in Ukraine.

Ukraine said Russian forces are trying to encircle the capital, Kyiv, and Kharkiv, the country's second biggest city, while attempting to set up a land bridge to Crimea.

Authorities in Sumy, about 190 miles east of Kyiv, reportedly urged residents to stay inside shelters, warning there could be fighting in the city's streets.

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is expected to press Washington for more help in a planned video call with the US Senate at 2.30pm GMT.

On Friday night he lashed out at Nato for ruling out a no-fly zone, saying it gave a "green light for further bombing of Ukrainian cities and villages".

“All the people who die from this day forward will also die because of you, because of your weakness, because of your lack of unity,” the Ukrainian president said in an emotional address, in which he praised the bravery of the Ukrainian resistance.

Nato said on Friday that a no-fly zone could provoke full-fledged war in Europe with nuclear-armed Russia, causing far greater loss of life.

“The only way to implement a no-fly zone is to send Nato fighter planes into Ukraine’s airspace, and then impose that no-fly zone by shooting down Russian planes,” Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg said. “If we did that, we’ll end up with something that could end in a full-fledged war in Europe, involving many more countries and causing much more human suffering.”

On Friday, Russian ground forces in the south of Ukraine made an assault on the shipbuilding centre of Mykolaiv as they began their long-expected push west towards the key port of Odesa.

Shelling of some smaller towns, has intensified to the point where 80% of the town has been damaged or destroyed by bombs, as civilians remain trapped in basements and bodies lie un-collected in the streets.

As people flee the crisis, a humanitarian disaster is unfolding, with more than 1.3 million people seeking refuge in western Ukraine and in neighbouring countries. The UN security council will hold an emergency meeting Monday on the humanitarian crisis triggered in Ukraine by the Russian invasion, diplomats said Friday.

In Russia, Putin’s crackdown on independent and critical voices has intensified, as the government moves to silence dissent tighten its grip on the flow of information. The Russian president introduced new laws and regulations cracking down on the free press and social media sites, prompting an exodus of media publishers from the country.

Putin has signed a bill into law introducing jail terms of up to 15 years for people publishing “false information” about the Russian army as Russia moves forward with its invasion of Ukraine. A number of outlets announced that they were ceasing Russian operations or removing coverage as a result.

The UK government on Saturday urged its nationals to consider leaving Russia, saying: “If your presence in Russia is not essential, we strongly advise that you consider leaving by remaining commercial routes.”

The BBC, CNN, Bloomberg and CBC are among the media outlets temporarily suspending operations or broadcasts in the country, saying the law “criminalises independent reporting in the country”.

In Ukraine, a Sky News crew was evacuated back to the UK after journalists were shot during an ambush by a suspected Russian “death squad” on Monday. Boris Johnson, the British prime minister, praised their courage and said journalists in Ukraine would “not be intimidated or cowed by barbaric and indiscriminate acts of violence”.

The Russian state media regulator, Roskomnadzor, has restricted access to Twitter, and the country has blocked Facebook, as well as the BBC, Voice of America and Deutsche Welle news sites. Putin also signed a bill that would allow fines or jail terms of up to three years for calling for sanctions against Russia.

Russia’s state aviation authority on Saturday recommended that Russian airlines with foreign-leased aircraft should suspend passenger and cargo flights abroad. The EU, Britain and the US are closing their airspace to Russia, starting next week.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Ukraine holds off Russia offensive Kyiv
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraines-special-forces-hold-off-russian-offensive-on-kyivs-front-lines-11646417190?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos4

IRPIN, Ukraine—Every day for the past week, [Russian forces](#) have tried to fight their way through this suburb of Kyiv to reach the Ukrainian capital. And every day, Ukrainian troops have forced them to retreat, leaving burning tanks and armored personnel carriers behind.

“We go out to hunt and destroy them,” said Volodymyr, a Ukrainian special-forces team leader, as his squad, armed with a British .308 sniper rifle and British-made antitank weapons, waited for [the latest Russian attack](#). “They certainly didn’t come here expecting that, expecting that we know how to fight.”

The front lines here have largely held fast since [the first day of the war](#), on Feb. 24, when a Russian column pushed in from Belarus to the north. In some places, including the neighboring town of Bucha, the Russians have been pushed back.

“Ukraine is fighting in a way nobody expected, not the Russians and not our Western partners,” said Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian presidential adviser and member of Kyiv’s delegation at cease-fire talks with Russia. “Kyiv was supposed to have fallen in three days.”

In part, that is because Ukraine has deployed elite special-forces units, trained by the U.S. and allies over the past several years, to defend Kyiv. [Armed with British NLA](#) and American-made Javelin antitank weapons and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, they have helped blunt the Russian advantage in aviation and long-range missiles and artillery.

But Kyiv is also holding because the Russian forces here seem to have stuck to [Soviet-style large maneuver tactics](#), moving in long convoys that are vulnerable to strikes by small reconnaissance units and by Ukraine’s fleet of [Turkish-made Bayraktar TB2 armed drones](#), Ukrainian officers said.

“We’re in shock at how dumb their behavior is,” said another member of the Ukrainian special-forces unit who has been going on missions in the area every night. His unit, he said, had lost two soldiers since the war began nine days ago, and killed more than 60 Russians in recent days. “Now, we mostly focus on hitting their rear, their supply convoys, because if they don’t get fuel, they can’t do anything.”

Morale among Ukrainian defenders was high in Irpin on Friday, even as a Russian attack airplane flew low over a housing block and sounds of artillery rounds landing got closer and closer. Big plumes of black smoke rose to the north and south of town, along other major routes where Russian forces have been trying for more than a week to break into Kyiv.

Cloud cover has hampered Russia’s use of combat helicopters, soldiers here said. But to be prepared in case enemy choppers or attack planes approached, one of the soldiers took a position with a portable anti-aircraft missile on his shoulder. Troops here say they operate their own small drones, including some with thermal cameras, to hunt for Russian targets.

“The Russians keep trying to enter and to encircle us, but they just can’t. We are together, we are organized, and we are strong-willed,” said Alyona Pavlova, an Irpin native and a soldier who was helping evacuate civilians from the town on Friday. “It’s a real war—and nobody was really ready at first, because nobody really believed that Russia would do something this mad.”

Ukrainian and foreign civilians have been streaming out of Irpin and cities beyond that are under Russian control, walking toward the relative safety of Kyiv despite shelling and airstrikes.

With a bridge over the Irpin River blown up, they have to climb down and under the span and then navigate a precarious pathway, their suitcases and pets in their hands. There was no formal agreement with Russia on the humanitarian corridor here, Ukrainian soldiers said, and the risk of a Russian shell hitting the area, something that happened before, was constant.

“I’ve spent seven days hiding in a shelter, but today the power went off and enough is enough,” said Mykhailo, a screenwriter who hiked with two backpacks for more than an hour from the other side of Irpin, near the next town of Bucha. He declined to provide his surname.

“The Russians are hitting everywhere, and it’s blowing up just outside my home now,” he said. It is the second time Mykhailo said he has had to move. He fled his hometown of Luhansk after pro-Russian forces took it over in 2014.

Tanya Rybko and her two children spent the entire morning walking from the town of Hostomel north of here. Russian forces control several parts of town, while Ukrainians are deployed in others. “And tonight, we were right in the middle of it all, between the two sides,” she said.

Russian troops, she added, had taken over a nearby apartment building, holding civilians hostage and seizing their phones so residents don’t phone in tips to Ukrainian troops. Hungry, the Russian forces were also looting local stores and homes, looking for food, she said.

Mohammad Amin, a Tunisian information-technology specialist, has been living in Ukraine for the past 10 years. On Friday, Mr. Amin, his Ukrainian wife and their 4-year-old son, with a small suitcase in tow, left the apartment they had purchased in Irpin and walked for nearly an hour to the bridge, hoping to get to Kyiv and then on to the European Union.

“I just cannot sit in the shelter anymore,” Mr. Amin said, out of breath. “The Russians, they are just jealous. They feel themselves defeated, and so they are just hitting apartments with civilians in them. They know very well where civilians live.”

He pointed to Ukrainian soldiers guarding the bridge, with bright-yellow tape on their helmets. “And these people,” he said, “they are heroes. Believe me, I am telling the truth.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Developing nations Covid hybrid immunity
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/hybrid-immunity-kept-omicron-deaths-low-in-countries-where-millions-arent-fully-vaccinated-11646476203?mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>SINGAPORE—When the highly infectious Omicron variant reached Asia a few months ago, India and Indonesia had a major gap in their defenses: Two-thirds of their populations were yet to be fully vaccinated.</p> <p>But the countries are emerging from their most recent Covid-19 waves with a fraction of the deaths they recorded during the onslaught of the earlier Delta variant. Their deaths per capita are even lower than more vaccinated places that have better healthcare systems such as South Korea, Japan and Hong Kong.</p> <p>A big part of the reason, epidemiologists say, is that developing nations hit hard by the Delta wave last year acquired high levels of immunity through infection. And that protection appears to have endured. Studies in India, Indonesia and South Africa show widespread prevalence of Covid-19 antibodies, far outstripping their vaccination rates.</p> <p>This is a breakthrough for the developing world. Relatively slow-moving vaccination drives had sparked fears that another tsunami of cases would overwhelm hospitals and drive up deaths, Omicron’s relative mildness notwithstanding. But past Covid-19 infections—far more widespread than official case counts depict—have helped them achieve immune cover broad and protective enough to hold off the most feared outcome. Although immunity will wane, it buys governments more time to expand coverage of vaccines and boosters before the virus mutates again.</p> <p>Vaccination campaigns have lagged behind in much of the developing world, as many countries struggle to distribute shots outside major urban areas. In Asia, countries like India, Indonesia and the Philippines have fully vaccinated half their populations. That is higher than the 13% of people living in Africa who are vaccinated, with 4% immunized in Nigeria, the continent’s most populous country. Latin America has done better. Many countries, including Brazil and Peru, have vaccinated more than 70% of their people.</p>

Natural immunity, which refers to antibodies acquired through infection, was widespread in Indonesia when Omicron arrived. One study from October to December of roughly 20,000 Indonesians found that 74% of unvaccinated Indonesians had protective antibodies, according to Pandu Riono, a University of Indonesia epidemiologist who worked with government researchers on the study.

Based in part on the results, Mr. Riono and his colleagues estimate that 70% of Indonesians had been infected with Covid-19 as of December, far higher than the 34% of Americans who had been infected by then, according to a survey by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Government serological surveys in India conducted last year have similarly shown that 97% of New Delhi residents and 87% of Mumbai residents have antibodies against Covid-19.

“Hybrid immunity, which is some combination of having exposure to infection and immunization, has been high in this part of the world,” said Ramanan Laxminarayan, director of the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics and Policy, a public-health research organization based in Washington, D.C., and New Delhi. “South and Southeast Asia did have a worse Delta wave.”

The situation is similar to South Africa, [where Omicron was discovered](#) and caused a surge of cases but relatively few deaths compared with previous waves. In a study published last month in the New England Journal of Medicine, South African researchers showed that even though 36% of people who were 12 years and older had received at least one vaccine dose in Gauteng province around the time Omicron began circulating, Covid-19 antibodies were widespread. Of unvaccinated survey participants in the province, 68% had Covid-19 antibodies, along with 93% of those who were vaccinated, the study showed.

Indonesia recently recorded caseloads higher than during its Delta peak, but it averaged 270 deaths a day compared with 1,800 in August, according to Our World in Data. In India, deaths during the Omicron wave peaked at an average of 1,100 a day in early February, compared with 4,200 during the height of the Delta wave in May.

Like much of the world, both countries are undercounting Covid-19 deaths. But the picture the data presents is corroborated by how their healthcare systems have fared. Unlike last year when hospitals ran out of oxygen and medicines, medical facilities this time around are less crowded, with many Covid-19 patients recovering at home. In the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, roughly 50% of Covid-19 hospital beds were unoccupied in mid-February, as cases were peaking.

“Deaths aren’t as heavy as they were before,” said Tri Maharani, an emergency-room doctor.

Some research suggests that immunity from infection lasts longer than immunity from vaccination. Dorry Segev, a professor of surgery and population health at NYU Langone Health, an academic medical center, led a team that published a research letter last month in the Journal of the American Medical Association that found that unvaccinated people maintained natural immunity up to 20 months after infection. He said that further research under review shows that this immunity was substantially protective against Omicron. Research from Israel and the U.K. show waning immunity from vaccination after a few months.

The U.S. CDC says fully vaccinated people and those previously infected with Covid-19 are at low risk of subsequent infection for at least six months.

Mr. Segev said the durability of natural immunity, alongside active vaccination campaigns, bodes well for countries like India and Indonesia. “We know the strongest immunity is hybrid immunity. Previous infection plus vaccination gives you epic levels of protection,” he said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Europe too late cut Russia gas addiction?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/europe-fears-it-could-be-too-late-to-shake-off-russian-gas-addiction-11646476200

Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#)'s [war in Ukraine](#) has jolted Europe's slow-moving efforts to wean itself off Russian natural gas, but time is running out, threatening to leave consumers cold and factories idle by next winter.

Whether the Kremlin turns off the taps [in retaliation for sanctions](#) or Europe stops buying, European policy makers agree that they need to prepare for a future with much less Russian energy, if any.

Untethering Europe's gas market from Russia would represent a monumental change for a Continent that has grown so reliant on gas from the Siberian permafrost that it has built little infrastructure needed for alternative supplies.

The European Union gets [around 40% of its gas](#) from Russia—and [that dependence](#) has grown in recent years. This week, as the West sought to [hobble Russia with sanctions](#), the EU was paying as much as 660 million euros—roughly \$722 million—a day to Russia, according to the Bruegel think tank. That is triple the level before Russia invaded Ukraine.

“It has become painfully clear that we cannot afford to leave to any third country the power to destabilize our energy markets or influence our energy choices,” Kadri Simson, the EU's energy commissioner, told the European Parliament on Thursday.

Replacing Russian gas is easier said than done, however. Many liquefied natural gas terminals that receive [deliveries from the U.S. and Qatar](#) are maxed out. Two new terminals approved by the German government this week will only be built in three years at the earliest, one of the companies involved has said.

Renewables would take even longer to make a difference, analysts say. Suppliers closer to home—such as Norway, Algeria and Azerbaijan—are unable to significantly scale up production. Internal linkages between Europe's gas pipeline networks are patchy, making it difficult to distribute whatever extra gas there is.

Any new LNG cargoes will come with a much higher price tag than piped Russian gas, threatening a European economy already struggling with inflation. Filling up enough gas in European storage ahead of next winter would cost at least 70 billion euros at current prices, compared with 12 billion euros in previous years, Bruegel says.

This leaves policy makers with unsavory choices if the flows stop, including energy rationing and [using more coal](#), jeopardizing climate-change goals.

“We would have to ask people to turn down the thermostat at home and we will have to ask industries to close down for a certain period of time,” said Simone Tagliapietra, a senior fellow at Bruegel.

In an extreme scenario, analysts say this might lead to chemical plants, smelters and other heavy gas users temporarily shutting down. In practice, that could be achieved via governments paying companies to limit natural gas and electricity consumption to a certain level via tenders, analysts said. Both gas and electricity would need to be rationed, potentially leading to blackouts and heating disruptions.

Despite officials touting diversification efforts for years, Europe has largely failed to prepare. Germany currently doesn't have a single LNG terminal. The EU's gas transmission system body hasn't accounted for a complete stop in Russian gas in its annual crisis modeling exercise. Russia also is the EU's main supplier of [crude oil and hard coal](#).

“Europe thought that energy security was something from the past, it was not a real risk anymore,” Mr. Tagliapietra said. “We just sat and did business as usual.”

Europe's reliance on Russia varies. Countries such as Germany, Italy and a clutch of Central and Eastern European nations are poised to be hit the hardest as they rely more on Russian imports. The U.K., Portugal

and Spain, on the other hand, don't consume much Russian gas—but even they would feel the sting from higher prices. European gas prices broke records this week as traders priced in the impact of possible disruptions.

“If the Russian gas stops, there will be no ceiling for prices,” said Martin Vladimirov, director of the energy and climate program at the Sofia, Bulgaria-based think tank Center for the Study of Democracy.

Research outlet Capital Economics is lowering its forecast for eurozone economic growth this year by around 1 percentage point on the back of sanctions. It said that an end to Russian gas deliveries could reduce growth by a further 2 percentage points and trigger a recession.

Officials and analysts agree that the consequences of a full stoppage now would be surmountable this winter and spring. Many thermal power plants that use gas could switch to fuel oil within a week or so, analysts say, with only temporary cuts in heating supply. Industries might need to curtail some of their activities.

Next winter—and beyond—look more challenging.

Record non-Russian imports wouldn't be enough to sufficiently refill storage ahead of the next cold period, Bruegel said, and Europe would need to reduce gas demand.

Even if European officials secure new supplies, getting them to the right place is another challenge. Much of Europe's re-gasification capacity, used to turn LNG back into gas, sits on its western coasts in Spain, France and the U.K. but the pipeline systems to Germany and the eastern flank aren't well linked to these places. LNG terminals in Spain are only 45% utilized but pipelines over the Pyrenees can't transport more and are difficult to expand, analysts say.

In the east, neighbors Bulgaria and Greece have been working on an interconnector for years that would enable Bulgaria, which gets around 75% of its gas from Russia, to tap into a Greek LNG terminal. It has yet to begin operation.

Meanwhile, a switch to coal, besides imperiling climate-change policies, is equally vulnerable to the crisis. In 2020, the EU got 49% of its hard coal imports from Russia.

“Over the next 12 months, there is little that can be done to remove hard physical bottlenecks,” Bruegel said. The crisis scenario “will require improvisation and entrepreneurial spirit.”

Long resistant to diversifying supplies away from cheap and plentiful Russian gas, Germany on Wednesday commissioned its gas market trading hub to buy LNG for 1.5 billion euros from outside Russia. On Monday, Italy's minister of foreign affairs and the chief executive of energy major Eni SpA shuttled to Algeria to negotiate new deliveries. Austrian officials have been meeting with leaders from Gulf states in recent weeks.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Court backs Title 42 curbs on migrants
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/court-upholds-federal-governments-title-42-border-policy-11646411635?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The U.S. government can continue to expel migrant families at the southern border under a public health policy known as Title 42, denying them a chance to ask for asylum, but can't send them back to countries where their life or freedom will be in danger, a federal appeals court ruled Friday.</p> <p>The ruling, made by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, will for now allow the Biden administration to continue its use of the public-health policy, the key tool both the Biden and Trump administrations have used for the last two years to combat illegal border crossings.</p>

The ruling, however, will likely require the Biden administration to begin screening migrant families before expelling them to ensure that any expulsion wouldn't result in the migrants' persecution or torture.

"It is likely that [Title 42] grants the Executive sweeping authority to prohibit aliens from entering the United States during a public-health emergency; that the Executive may expel aliens who violate such a prohibition; and that under...the Convention Against Torture, the Executive cannot expel aliens to countries where their 'life or freedom would be threatened,'" the three-judge panel wrote in a unanimous opinion.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention under the Trump administration issued its Title 42 order in March 2020, using an obscure 1944 public health authority allowing the government to prevent the entry of any foreigners to prevent the spread of a communicable disease.

The American Civil Liberties Union sued the Biden administration last year over its use of Title 42 to expel migrant families without giving them a chance to apply for asylum, a policy that it argued illegally circumvented existing legal protections built into immigration law.

The U.S. District Court in Washington issued a preliminary opinion upholding that view, though [the district court judge's order halting expulsions](#) of families was put on hold.

The appeals court narrowed that view, saying only that the government doesn't have a blanket right to expel migrants regardless of safety concerns.

The case is still in a preliminary stage, and the appeals court sent the case back to the District Court for further review. The opinion also doesn't apply to migrants traveling without minor children, as they weren't party to the ACLU's lawsuit. The Biden administration has already agreed not to use Title 42 [to expel unaccompanied minors](#) and exempted them from Title 42 under [a new CDC policy](#) to that effect in July.

However, a federal judge in Texas ruled in a separate case Friday evening that the Biden administration can't exempt unaccompanied children from Title 42 based strictly on their status as unaccompanied children. That lawsuit was brought by the state of Texas, which has argued that Mr. Biden's immigration policies are harmful to the state.

In a case filed by the ACLU challenging Title 42 under the Trump administration, the federal appeals court in Washington ruled in January 2021 that unaccompanied minors could be removed under Title 42. That court order became moot after the Biden administration announced it no longer intended to remove children traveling alone under the public health policy.

In his 37-page ruling Friday night, U.S. District Judge Mark Pittman stayed his own order for seven days, giving the government an opportunity to appeal. Should the ruling stand, children also would be subject to the D.C. court's ruling.

Representatives for the Biden administration didn't respond to requests for comment for either ruling. Lee Gelernt, the ACLU lawyer who argued the case before the appeals court, said the ruling represented a win for migrants because the government can no longer use public-health law to deny their human rights. "No court has accepted the government's view that the public health laws can override our domestic and international obligations," Mr. Gelernt said. "We hope the Biden administration will now accept this appeals court ruling and end Title 42 across the board with no further litigation."

In the Biden administration's first year in office, it expelled migrants from the country about 1.1 million times, with about 150,000 of those representing expulsions of migrant families. The majority were sent back across the border to Mexico but some were in expulsion flights to their home countries, including to Haiti and Guatemala. The U.S. has even begun expelling some migrants to third countries, such as Venezuelans who crossed the border illegally to Colombia, which already hosts 1.7 million displaced Venezuelans, according to the United Nations Refugee Agency.

The court's ruling, should it not be halted pending further litigation, would take away some of the appeal Title 42 offers. Rather than performing blanket expulsions of migrants, such as the thousands of Haitians the Biden administration [deported back to Haiti](#) in September, it would need to provide each person a screening, which will take considerable time.

The judges acknowledged that their ruling would mean that more migrants would be kept in detention in close proximity to each other and to border officials, one of the situations the government's Title 42 policy had sought to avoid to prevent the spread of Covid-19. But the court rebuked the Biden administration for failing to adjust its pandemic reasoning as time passed.

"The CDC's [Title 42] order looks in certain respects like a relic from an era with no vaccines, scarce testing, few therapeutics, and little certainty," the judges wrote. "We cannot blindly defer to the CDC in these circumstances."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Strong hiring signals shift in economy
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/february-jobs-report-unemployment-rate-2022-11646343310?mod=hp_lead_pos1&mod=hp_lead_pos2
GIST	<p>The U.S. labor market is pivoting toward a post-pandemic world, with a steady stream of adults joining the labor force and employment approaching levels before Covid-19 began its rapid spread.</p> <p>Employers added 678,000 workers to their payrolls in February, the biggest gain in seven months, the Labor Department said Friday. The jobless rate fell to 3.8% from 4.0% a month earlier, edging closer to the 50-year low of 3.5% hit just before the pandemic.</p> <p>More than 300,000 people joined the workforce, and the ranks of those reporting being unable to work because of Covid-19 fell by 1.8 million. Wage growth cooled, a sign that a nationwide labor shortage might be easing as employers fill lower-wage positions that had long been dormant.</p> <p>Hotels, restaurants, amusement parks and other hospitality industries led the way in hiring as firms sought to accommodate a growing number of vacationers, convention attendees and business travelers. Big states and cities in recent days have lifted some of the remaining Covid restrictions, which could further boost business and hiring.</p> <p>Friday's jobs numbers resulted from surveys of households and businesses in mid-February and thus didn't show what effects, if any, Russia's invasion last week of Ukraine has had on the economy. Big threats loom, including a sharp run-up in oil prices that could crimp household spending and ultimately nick the economic and labor market recovery, economists said.</p> <p>"We are getting a preview of what the post-pandemic labor market can look like," said Daniel Zhao, senior economist at Glassdoor. "The fundamentals of the labor market remain strong."</p> <p>The rapid drop in the jobless rate—from 6.2% a year ago and a post-World War II high of 14.7% in April 2020—could embolden the Federal Reserve as it moves to lift interest rates for the first time since the pandemic began in March 2020, some economists said. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell told Congress this week he planned to propose a quarter percentage point increase at the Fed's March 15-16 meeting to combat high inflation.</p> <p>The strong job numbers were overshadowed by investor concerns about Russia's intensifying military attack on Ukraine. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 179.86 points, or 0.53%, to 33614.80. The S&P 500 Index dropped 34.62 points, or 0.79%, to 4328.87.</p> <p>Three shifts could lead to stronger job growth this spring, economists said.</p>

The first is the continuing decline in virus cases. The second is the move by some states and cities in recent days like Washington, New York, California and Hawaii to lift rules that required customers to be vaccinated and wear masks. The third is a potential decline in household savings, which could pressure people to rejoin the labor market to collect a paycheck, particularly as inflation rises and the [stock market wobbles](#).

The U.S. still has 2.1 million, or 1.4%, fewer jobs than in February 2020. That gap would close in a matter of months at the current pace of hiring. Since October the economy has created three million jobs.

While Covid-19 infections have fallen sharply from their January peak, the pandemic isn't over. Many industries say they [still struggle to find workers](#); job openings remain near record levels and [workers continue to quit at record rates](#), often for better-paying jobs, leaving many firms short-staffed.

Employers like hotel operator Garn Development are desperate to fill positions, particularly those that are entry level, to accommodate strong spending by families.

Bookings across the company's hotels in Utah and several other Western states rose roughly 60% last year from 2020 and continue to pick up this year, said Gabe Garn, operations manager of the family-owned company. Hotel managers have had to clean rooms, serve food and do other tasks normally reserved for lower-paid employees because of the labor shortage, Mr. Garn said.

While the company has had some luck filling jobs of late, many workers quit shortly after being hired for better pay in other industries.

"Almost the second you don't get the schedule you want, you just leave and go find something else because everywhere is hiring," Mr. Garn said. "Now when we interview, it's almost like we're selling ourselves versus how the employee sells themselves to us. Now you've got to convince them you're worthy of them versus the opposite."

The hospitality industry—among the hardest-hit sectors during the pandemic because of the sharp drop in travel—accounted for 1 in 4 new jobs across the U.S. in February. But the gains were broad-based, covering office jobs, construction, healthcare and other sectors. The Labor Department also revised up the prior two months' job growth.

Strong demand for hiring in such industries appears to be benefiting groups that typically have higher levels of unemployment. The unemployment rate for workers with no high-school diploma fell to 4.3% last month, the lowest on records dating to 1992. The jobless rate for Black workers fell 0.3 percentage point to 6.6%, though the rate remained twice as high as white workers. The jobless rate for Hispanic workers fell half a percentage point to 4.4%.

The decline in unemployment came from people who had been unemployed for a short amount of time. The number of people jobless for less than five weeks fell by 286,000, while those unemployed for six months or more held steady.

Several shifts appear to be helping the industry and other service providers fill jobs.

[Higher wages](#) are likely enticing workers back into the labor force, particularly as the cost of living rises and household savings—while still at a historically high level after stimulus checks and unemployment insurance from the federal government last year—falls.

The average hourly pay of private-sector workers grew just a penny last month from January, after five consecutive months in which it had grown at least a dime. Average wages fell last month for manufacturing, education and health and hospitality workers. Still, overall, workers earned 5.1% more in February than they did a year earlier.

	<p>The labor-force participation rate—the share of people employed or looking for work—rose to 62.3% from 62.2%. But it remained 1.1 percentage points below its pre-pandemic level. Some economists have doubts about whether the rate will fully recover. Many older workers retired early during the pandemic, and immigration is down sharply.</p> <p>The labor market could be approaching—or perhaps is at or beyond—the level of employment that can persist without stoking stronger inflation. That poses a dilemma for the Fed. With inflation at 7.5% in January—far above the central bank’s target of 2%—the Fed plans to raise interest rates multiple times this year to prevent the economy from overheating. But policy makers want to do so at a modest enough pace that would enable job growth to continue.</p> <p>The Fed in December projected that unemployment in the long run will settle at 4%.</p> <p>Stephen Stanley, chief economist at Amherst Pierpont, said drawing more workers off the sidelines might be difficult. The share of adults 25 to 54 years old with a job is only a percentage point lower than it was in February 2020. He estimates there are roughly one million workers in that age group who are on the sidelines. “The notion that there are millions of sidelined workers waiting to re-enter the job hunt soon is probably not right,” he said in a note to clients. “The labor market is overheating almost entirely because of exceedingly strong demand, a situation that is unlikely to reverse for quite some time.”</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/04 Russia targets media outlets: fake news law
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-targets-media-outlets-with-fake-news-law-blocks-facebook-11646442530
GIST	<p>Russia passed a law that threatens prison time for anyone publishing what authorities consider to be false information about the country’s invasion of Ukraine, which the Kremlin refers to as a special military operation.</p> <p>The law—a change to the country’s criminal code, which the lower chamber of Russia’s parliament approved on Friday—says anyone found guilty of knowingly disseminating false information and data about the use of Russia’s armed forces would be punished by a prison sentence of up to 15 years or a fine of up to 1.5 million rubles, equivalent to about \$14,000. Reporting data on Russia’s military casualties not provided by the Russian Defense Ministry would also be considered a violation.</p> <p>The move caused news organizations to weigh their options, including suspending operations in Russia, limiting use of their reporters’ bylines or adhering to the Kremlin’s description of its actions in Ukraine as a special military operation or peacekeeping mission.</p> <p>CNN on Friday said it would stop broadcasting in Russia, while the British Broadcasting Corp. and Bloomberg News decided to suspend the work of their journalists inside the country.</p> <p>Combined with Russian authorities’ decision Friday to block Meta Platforms Inc.’s Facebook in the country, the law marked an escalation in Russia’s efforts to prevent the flow of information that contradicts its narrative of the conflict in Ukraine and the role of Russia’s military in triggering a humanitarian crisis.</p> <p>The Kremlin describes its actions as a “special military operation” aimed at protecting Russia’s security and that of Russian-speaking people in Ukraine’s eastern Donbas region against the government in Kyiv.</p> <p>Vyacheslav Volodin, chairman of the State Duma—the lower chamber of Russia’s parliament—said that the law was designed to punish individuals and outlets that spread what he called fake news. He also accused U.S. social-media platforms including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube of launching “an information war against Russia.” Twitter Inc. declined to comment, and YouTube parent Google, a unit of Alphabet Inc., didn’t respond to a request for comment.</p>

Russian authorities on Friday blocked Facebook in response to restrictions it said the social-media platform had placed on Russian media outlets including state news agency RIA Novosti, Sputnik, RT, television channel Zvezda, Lenta.ru and Gazeta.ru.

“Soon millions of ordinary Russians will find themselves cut off from reliable information,” Nick Clegg, president for global affairs at Meta, said in a statement. “We will continue to do everything we can to restore our services so they remain available to people to safely and securely express themselves and organize for action.”

As a result of the law’s passage, the BBC said it would temporarily suspend the work of all its journalists in Russia.

“This legislation appears to criminalize the process of independent journalism,” BBC Director-General Tim Davie said in a statement Friday. “The safety of our staff is paramount and we are not prepared to expose them to the risk of criminal prosecution simply for doing their jobs.” The BBC News service in Russian will continue to operate from outside Russia, the BBC said.

Bloomberg News also said it would temporarily suspend the work of its journalists inside Russia. “The change to the criminal code, which seems designed to turn any independent reporter into a criminal purely by association, makes it impossible to continue any semblance of normal journalism inside the country,” John Micklethwait, editor in chief, wrote in a note to staff.

CNN, meanwhile, “will stop broadcasting in Russia while we continue to evaluate the situation and our next steps moving forward,” a spokesman for the network said. A spokeswoman for CBS News said the network wasn’t “broadcasting from Russia as we monitor the circumstances for our team on the ground given the new media laws” passed Friday.

It wasn’t immediately clear how the new law would be enforced, and news organizations were still working to process its implications.

“Our top priorities are the safety of our employees and covering this important story fairly and fully,” said a spokesman from Dow Jones & Co., which publishes The Wall Street Journal. “Being in Moscow, freely able to talk to officials and capture the mood, is key to that mission.” The company declined to provide specific details regarding plans for employees in the region.

A Washington Post spokeswoman said the news publisher intended “to exercise caution while seeking clarity about how these reported restrictions would affect Washington Post correspondents and local staff.”

Last week, Russia’s communications regulator ordered the removal of reports from the media that describe Moscow’s attack on Ukraine as an “assault, invasion or declaration of war,” or face being fined or blocked.

Russia’s Novaya Gazeta newspaper, whose editor, Dmitry Muratov, was a co-winner of last year’s Nobel Peace Prize, on Friday said it would remove material from its website in which hostilities in Ukraine are described as war, aggression or invasion. The newspaper, known for its critical and investigative coverage of Russian political and social affairs, wrote that it was forced to make the decision.

Earlier Friday, members of the State Duma adopted amendments to the country’s criminal code, which would “increase the liability for spreading fake [news] about the actions of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, as well as for public calls for the imposition of sanctions against Russia,” according to information about the amendments to the law published on the government’s website.

If the law is violated by an individual in an official capacity, “for reasons of political, ideological, racial, national or religious hatred or enmity, or for reasons of hatred or enmity against any social group, then imprisonment can be up to ten years,” the law says.

	<p>If the violation causes grave consequences, the perpetrator of the offense will be “punished by imprisonment for a term of ten to fifteen years,” the law says.</p> <p>The Federation Council, the parliament’s upper chamber, and President Vladimir Putin both approved the law. The final step is for it to be published, which could come as soon as Saturday.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/04 West unplugs Russia financial systems
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-ukraine-sanctions-banks-finance-11646428069
GIST	<p>Two weeks ago, Russia’s companies could sell their goods around the globe and take in investments from overseas stock-index funds. Its citizens could buy MacBooks and Toyotas at home, and freely spend their rubles abroad.</p> <p>Now they are in a financial bind. Soon after Russia invaded Ukraine, another war began to isolate its economy and pressure President Vladimir Putin. The first move was made by Western governments to sanction the country’s banking system. But over the course of the past week, the financial system took over and severed practically every artery of money between Russia and the rest of the world, in some cases going further than what was required by the sanctions.</p> <p>Visa Inc. and Mastercard Inc. stopped processing foreign purchases for millions of Russian citizens. Apple Inc. and Google shut off their smartphone-enabled payments, stranding cashless travelers at Moscow metro stations. International firms stepped back from providing the credit and insurance that underpin trade shipments.</p> <p>This unplugging of the world’s 11th-largest economy opens a new chapter in the history of economic conflict. In a world that relies on the financial system’s plumbing—clearing banks, settlement systems, messaging protocols and cross-border letters of credit—a few concerted moves can flatten a major economy.</p> <p>Russia now faces a repeat of one of the most painful episodes in its post-Soviet history—the financial crisis of 1998, when its economy collapsed overnight. In the decades that followed, Russia earned its way back into the good graces of financiers in New York, London and Tokyo. It is all being undone at warp speed and will not be easily put back together.</p> <p>The ruble has lost more than one-quarter of its value and is now virtually useless outside of Russia, with Western firms refusing to exchange it or process overseas transactions. Moscow’s stock exchange was closed for a fifth straight day on Friday. The Russian Central Bank more than doubled interest rates to attract foreign investment and halt the ruble’s free fall. Two firms that are crucial to clearing securities trades, Euroclear and DTCC, said they would stop processing certain Russian transactions.</p> <p>With their interest payments stuck inside the country—following the sanctions, Mr. Putin also ordered intermediaries in Russia not to pay—some Russian companies and government entities could default on their bond payments to international creditors. That could make the country toxic for investing for years. Shares of Russian companies, even those without obvious ties to the Kremlin, were booted from stock-index funds, which will further isolate them from pools of Western capital.</p> <p>Analysts expect Russia’s economy to contract as much as 20% this quarter, roughly the same hit the British economy took in the spring of 2020 during the pandemic lockdowns.</p> <p>Aleksandr Iurev left Moscow eight years ago as an aspiring entrepreneur. Russia’s escalating hostility in the region made it “no place for business people,” he said from his home in New Jersey. The 36-year-old runs a mobile-app startup and this week, he can’t make payroll for the six developers who work for him in Russia because they hold personal accounts at sanctioned banks.</p> <p>“It is completely shut off,” he said. He’s looking into cryptocurrency to keep his staff from bolting.</p>

His company, Pocketfied, has other problems: Members of his marketing team in Ukraine took the week off to help build street barricades in Dnipro, in the country's east.

The one lifeline that still connects Russia's economy to Western markets is its supplies of energy, which European countries rely on and have been loath to cut off, especially during the winter. U.S. lawmakers are pressuring the White House to expand sanctions to include energy payments, which would sap Russia of its largest source of income, at \$240 billion last year.

Even if governments don't act, the market is speaking: Russian oil producers have had [trouble finding buyers](#) for shipments since the invasion began.

"The golden age that we had from 1945 to last week is now over," said Gary Greenberg, head of global emerging markets at [Federated Hermes](#), which manages \$669 billion in assets. "As investors, we need to look at things differently now."

As it dug out from the 1998 crash, Russia plugged itself into the global economy. It joined Brazil, China and India—dubbed the BRIC economies by Western investors—as the next frontier of finance.

American, British and Swiss banks courted the flood of money its oil industry produced. Russia's biggest banks listed shares in London. One of them moved into an office across the street from the Bank of England. The Moscow exchange itself went public in 2013 with backing from U.S. and European investors.

The first signs of decoupling came in 2014, when Mr. Putin's territorial ambitions began to stir. Western governments put limited sanctions on Russia after it annexed Crimea from Ukraine.

Russia began trying to sanction-proof its economy. It built its own domestic payments network—called Mir, Russian for "peace"—to function alongside and, if needed, replace those run by Western firms. It shifted its overseas holdings away from the U.S. and its European allies and toward China, which has been [relatively more accommodating of Mr. Putin's efforts](#) to expand his influence and territory. It doubled its gold reserves.

Those efforts to wall itself off may prove insufficient. At least 40% of Russia's \$630 billion in foreign reserves are in countries that have joined in the latest sanctions. The rest, mostly in China, it is free to spend—but only in China. Moving those reserves out of the country would require first converting them into a Western currency like dollars or euros, which no global bank will do.

Russia, like many energy-rich countries, exports oil and gas and imports much else—automotive parts, medicines, broadcast equipment, wallpaper, fresh vegetables.

The financial journey that enables their geographical one depends on a complex web of loans, insurance policies and payments. Western banks are stepping back from trade financing, executives said, wary of the risk that their counterparty uses a sanctioned Russian bank, or has ties to a sanctioned oligarch. Maersk, the Danish shipping giant, [suspended deliveries](#) to Russia, citing tougher terms now being demanded by financiers.

Czarnikow Group, a London-based trade-financing firm, was preparing this week to send a shipload of a specialty plastic used in soda bottles and clamshell packaging, with scheduled stops in Russia and Ukraine. On Monday, the firm got notice from its insurance provider that its policy would no longer cover the ship.

"It was obvious we weren't going to be able to put a vessel in," said Robin Cave, Czarnikow's chief executive, who began looking for alternative ports and is talking to his client about where to send the cargo.

The steps taken by financial firms could close off Russia from global markets for years. Some of the largest index compilers, which maintain lists of stocks that are tracked by trillions of dollars of investments, said they would exclude Russian stocks.

The move was in part a practical decision. With the Moscow stock exchange still closed, it is impossible to assign prices to those shares. But it will ultimately damp the flow of foreign capital into Russia's economy, said Anusha Chari, a professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

An increasing share of investment dollars simply tracks such collections of securities. When Russian companies fall out of the index, that money disappears, which makes it harder for those companies to raise cash in the future.

"It puts the brakes on real investment," Ms. Chari said.

Index compilers have dropped countries from key indexes before, during periods of economic instability in places like Pakistan and Argentina. But in those cases, the decisions came after months of deliberations, said Dimitris Melas, a senior executive at [MSCI](#) Inc., which took the step Thursday.

"The speed with which events are unfolding, and the severity, made us act a lot faster," he said.

Whether investors will be able to sell the Russian assets they hold is less clear. Norway's largest pension fund, KLP Group, planned to unload its Russian stocks this week. With the Moscow exchange still closed, it has resorted to selling shares of companies with a dual listing in London, said Kiran Aziz, an executive at the \$70 billion fund.

"The market is essentially dead" for Russian assets, said Edward Al-Hussainy, an analyst at Columbia Threadneedle Investments. For the first time he can remember, investors are telling the firm to sell—no matter the price.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Ukraine, Russia agree: evacuation corridors
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-and-russia-agree-to-open-corridors-for-civilians-to-evacuate-mariupol-11646470358
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine—Russia and Ukraine agreed Saturday to open humanitarian corridors for evacuating civilians from the besieged eastern Ukrainian cities of Mariupol and Volnovakha as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky lashed out at the West for refusing to implement a no-fly zone over his country that would prevent Russian bombardments of civilian areas.</p> <p>The corridors, which Ukrainian officials said would also be used to resupply the two cities with food, medicines and other essentials, were the first tangible result of the talks between Russian and Ukrainian representatives in Belarus. These talks were due to resume as soon as Saturday, the third round of negotiations since Moscow invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. Their previous talks, on Thursday, led to a tentative agreement to establish the humanitarian corridors.</p> <p>The two delegations would only meet again if there is progress in implementing the humanitarian corridors and other agreements reached in prior sessions, a Ukrainian negotiator said. He didn't expect a quick cease-fire, saying that Russian President Vladimir Putin believes he is winning—a posture he said wouldn't change until the West bans the imports of Russian oil and gas. "We have no illusions here, we are sitting across the table from people who want to exterminate us," the negotiator said.</p> <p>Mariupol is a major industrial city and port on the Azov sea, home to some 400,000 people. Volnovakha is a much smaller town to the north. Both belong to Ukraine's Donetsk region, which Russia no longer acknowledges as part of Ukraine after recognizing the independence of the so-called Donetsk people's republic, a statelet Moscow created in one-third of that region in 2014.</p>

The [Russian invasion of Ukraine](#), which U.S. officials had forecast would lead to the capture of capital Kyiv within three days, has run into fierce Ukrainian resistance that caused large Russian losses in troops and equipment. Ukraine's General Staff said Saturday it was holding the line on most fronts and was beginning a counteroffensive. To make up for these setbacks, Russia has increasingly resorted to indiscriminate bombing and shelling of civilian areas, particularly in Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Sumy and Mariupol, which is under siege.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's decision on Friday not to interfere in Russia's air operations over Ukraine was a sign of weakness and division in the Western alliance that had "hypnotized itself" with fear of Moscow, Mr. Zelensky said in a televised address. He spoke after NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg ruled out involving the alliance in combat operations in Ukraine because such a move could spark a full-scale war between [NATO's members](#) and Russia, which possesses a [vast arsenal of nuclear weapons](#).

"All the people who die from this day forward will also die because of you," Mr. Zelensky said, adding that NATO's refusal to act had given Moscow a "green light" to bomb Ukrainian cities and villages.

The corridor between Mariupol and the Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhya will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Kyiv time Saturday, with another opportunity to travel the following days, Ukrainian authorities said.

"Our main task has always been to protect our people. At a time when our hometown is under merciless fire by the occupiers, there is no choice but to allow its residents to leave Mariupol in safety," the city's mayor Vadim Boychenko said in a message to his constituents Saturday. He also thanked the city's defenders for repelling nine days of Russian attacks.

Ukraine's deputy prime minister and minister for occupied territories, Iryna Vereshchuk, said that the cease-fire was coordinated through the International Committee of the Red Cross, and that Ukraine expects to evacuate some 200,000 people from Mariupol and 15,000 people from Volnovakha. ICRC representatives will lead the columns, she said. Russian forces, she warned, are trying to take advantage of the cease-fire to advance on Ukrainian positions.

Ukraine is working on similar evacuations for civilians from besieged Chernihiv and Sumy and Russian-occupied Kherson and towns northwest of Kyiv, she said.

One of the Ukrainian cease-fire negotiators, presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak, said at a press conference Friday in Lviv that Russia is seeking a diplomatic solution because it badly miscalculated the mood of the Ukrainian people. Moscow went to war thinking that only some 20% of Ukrainians are hostile to Russia, and the remaining 80% will welcome their Russian brothers with flowers, he said. In reality, he added, some 98% of Ukrainians are determined to fight the invasion.

Despite setbacks in the north, Russian forces made significant advances in southern Ukraine, fanning from the Crimean Peninsula to take the city of Kherson, the city of Enerhodar that houses Europe's largest nuclear power station, and the Azov sea coastal cities of Berdyansk and Melitopol. Heavy combat continued overnight on the outskirts of Mykolaiv, a Black Sea city that is on the path to Odessa, Ukraine's biggest port. Russian officials say their military operation is proceeding as planned and achieving the desired results.

Pro-Ukrainian protests broke out on Kherson's main square, in front of the regional government building that has been seized by Russia, on Friday, with local residents waving Ukrainian flags and calling on Russian troops to go home.

Russia drew widespread condemnation after its forces caused a fire at the Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant in Enerhodar before [taking control of the area](#), according to local authorities and international observers. That sparked fears that Moscow's increasingly indiscriminate war could cause a global environmental disaster. Another nuclear power plant is located near Mykolaiv.

Mr. Podolyak said Kyiv had offered Russia to mutually agree not to conduct combat operations in zones within 30 kilometers of nuclear reactors. Russia didn't accept that proposal, he said.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, in an interview with three European newspapers, called for the establishment of a system to ensure the safety of Ukraine's nuclear power plants and monitor radiation levels, adding that the Russian attack on the plant put the entire continent at risk.

The fire, extinguished Friday morning, erupted at the Zaporizhzhia power plant's training facility, Ukraine's emergency service said. None of the plant's six reactors were affected and no radiation leaked, officials said. Both sides said Russian troops at the complex weren't interfering with the plant's Ukrainian staff.

The skirmish fanned fears of a repeat of the 1986 nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, which sent a vast plume of radioactive steam encircling the world and rendered the region surrounding the plant uninhabitable. Russian forces seized the decommissioned Chernobyl plant, which sits near the Belarus border, on the first day of the war and have since then been holding the staff hostage, preventing shift rotations, Ukrainian authorities said.

A senior U.S. defense official said Friday that since Feb. 26, the U.S. had delivered to Ukraine \$240 million in weaponry taken from U.S. military stocks. U.S. officials have said the shipments include Javelin antitank weaponry, Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, small arms and ammunition.

The administration is asking Congress to provide additional military support to Ukraine. The U.S. has been working closely with Britain, Canada, Lithuania and Poland to coordinate security assistance to Ukraine, the defense official added. All told, 14 countries are providing such security assistance to Ukraine.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 NKorea conducts ninth missile test of year
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nkorea-conducts-suspected-missile-test-ahead-skorea-election-2022-03-05/
GIST	<p>SEOUL, March 5 (Reuters) - North Korea conducted its ninth weapons test of the year on Saturday, firing a suspected ballistic missile toward the sea to the east of the Korean peninsula just days before South Korea's presidential election.</p> <p>The launch drew condemnation from governments in the United States, South Korea, and Japan, which fear the North is preparing to conduct a major weapons test in coming months.</p> <p>With denuclearisation talks stalled, North Korea conducted a record number of missile launches in January, and after a pause for most of February, resumed tests with a launch on Feb. 27.</p> <p>It appears to be preparing to launch a spy satellite in the near future, and has suggested it could resume testing of nuclear weapons or its longest range intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) for the first time since 2017.</p> <p>"The significant pace at which North Korea is developing its missile-launching technology is not something our country and the surrounding regions can overlook," Japan's Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi said after the latest launch.</p> <p>In South Korea, where citizens are already casting early votes ahead of Wednesday's presidential election, the National Security Council (NSC) condemned North Korea's "unprecedented repeated firing of ballistic missiles" as going against peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.</p>

South Korea will "even more closely monitor North Korea's nuclear and missile-related facilities" including its main nuclear reactor facility at Yongbyon and the Punggye-ri nuclear weapons test site, the NSC said, according to a statement from the presidential Blue House.

It was not immediately clear what prompted the increased monitoring of the nuclear sites.

On Friday, the U.S.-based 38 North project, which monitors North Korea, said operations at Yongbyon are in full swing, producing fuel for potential nuclear weapons and an expansion of its nuclear production facilities.

Punggye-ri has been shuttered since North Korea declared a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear weapons tests in 2018. Leader Kim Jong Un, however, has said he no longer feels bound by that moratorium as denuclearisation talks are stalled.

South Korea has reported a series of small, natural earthquakes near Punggye-ri this year, highlighting what experts say is geological instability caused by the last and largest nuclear test in 2017. Experts have also said that instability would not necessarily prevent North Korea from resuming tests at the site.

MISSILE TESTS

The U.S. State Department condemned the latest launch as a violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions, which have imposed sanctions on North Korea over its weapons programmes.

The launch demonstrates the threat that North Korea's illicit weapons of mass destruction and missile programmes pose to the its neighbours and the region as a whole, a State Department spokesperson said.

The South Korean military said Saturday's launch came from a location near Sunan, where Pyongyang's international airport is located. The region has been the site of previous tests, including the last launch on Feb. 27, when North Korea said it tested systems for a reconnaissance satellite.

Kishi said the North Korean projectile reached a height of 550 km (340 miles) and flew 300 km (190 miles), similar to the South Korean military's estimate of 560 km height and 270 km distance.

The launch underscores the challenges facing whoever wins Wednesday's presidential election in South Korea.

Both leading candidates have said they would unveil roadmaps to try to jumpstart stalled talks, but have also raised the prospect of a harder line ranging from more openly calling the North's missile tests "provocations" to developing more military capacity for preemptive strikes if necessary to counter an imminent threat.

Analysts say North Korea could use the upcoming presidential transition in South Korea or a big national holiday on April 15 to launch a satellite or test fire a major new missile or other weapon.

"The timing of North Korea's missile testing may seem odd to us, given the global focus on Ukraine," Jean Lee, a fellow at the Washington-based Wilson Center, said on Twitter. "But it makes perfect sense in North Korea, where scientists are focused on perfect new weapons for Kim to show off at a big military parade in mid-April."

The United States has said it is open to talks without preconditions, but Pyongyang says talks are only possible after Washington and its allies drop hostile policies.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Russia state TV reveals Putin intentions
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/russian-state-tv-just-blew-up-putins-nazi-ukraine-bullshit?ref=home

Confusion reigns on [Russia's state TV](#), as panicked lawmakers and pundits try to explain to the public why their country [invaded Ukraine](#) and now faces [crushing Western sanctions](#). And in the process of zealous propagandists striving to justify the unfathomable, they've inadvertently revealed too much.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov [told](#) state TV on Friday that President Vladimir Putin was directly involved in making command decisions with respect to Russia's military activities in Ukraine. He [urged](#): "It's time to unite around our president," and encouraged those who understand the Kremlin's aims to "patiently explain" them to anyone who doesn't.

Appearing on the state TV [show](#) *The Evening With Vladimir Soloviev* on Friday, lawmaker Andrei Kartapolov, who heads the Russian parliament's defense committee, then set out to justify Putin's military activities in Ukraine.

Starting with the most recent news of a terrifying fire caused by the Russian military's efforts to take control over the Zaporizhzhia [nuclear power plant](#), Kartapolov claimed that Russian troops were ordered to seize Ukraine's nuclear plants to prevent Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky "from building a dirty bomb" with which to attack Russia.

Kartapolov's baseless allegation stemmed solely from Zelensky's statement at the Munich Security Conference on Feb. 19, where he brought up the failure by the signatories to honor the Budapest memorandum, wherein Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal in return for security guarantees. Zelensky requested new security guarantees—or, in the alternative, he stressed that all provisions of the 1994 agreement would be void. This statement contained no threats towards Russia, but was convenient enough to be appropriated as one of Putin's claims as to why Ukraine somehow posed a threat to its larger neighbor.

On Soloviev's show—an Orwellian environment, typical of the Russian state media—the host and every panelist repeatedly denied the obvious, attempting to disprove the notion that Russia is at war with Ukraine. Soloviev asked: "Are we *de facto* at war with NATO?" Kartapolov concurred: "*De facto*, we are at war with NATO, because all of Ukraine's military formations are carrying out NATO's tasks... NATO is also solving another problem, getting rid of Europe's excess migrants by sending them to fight in Ukraine." He pompously concluded: "God is not in power, but in truth."

As to the Kremlin's aims in Ukraine, Kartapolov explained them in detail: "Our position is clear and transparent, including during these negotiations. The essence is as follows: Ukraine will recognize Crimea as the Russian Federation, as well as DPR/LPR ['Donetsk People's Republic' and 'Luhansk People's Republic'] within their administrative borders. Ukraine will change its social and state system and become a neutral, demilitarized country. That's it."

Lawmaker Konstantin Zatulin, who is deputy chairman of the Duma commission on relations with the former Soviet Union, seemed unsettled by Kartapolov's revelations and angrily replied: "When a horse has something to say, a saddle shouldn't be the one to talk. This is not the time to tell everything. First of all, we're not the ones who should be saying that, they [Ukrainians] need to be the ones who say that. But that situation has to ripen first. It won't be done during the thunder of cannons. Until our operation has concluded, it won't be clear what 'denazification' will consist of."

As for "demilitarization," Zatulin said that even specific kinds of weapons Russia wants to eliminate from Ukraine are being discussed during talks between the Russian and Ukrainian delegations.

The banter revealed Putin's apparent strategy in Ukraine: destroy Ukraine's infrastructure and cause widespread desperation with a brutal military assault, which would then compel the Ukrainian government to concede to Putin's terms and leave their positions or face a violent removal by force. It's a land grab of Eastern Ukraine, followed by the transformation of the rest of the country into a powerless vassal state, controlled and headed by Putin's puppets. To break Ukraine's resolve, the Kremlin likely intends to replicate the brutality it demonstrated in Syria and Chechnya.

The devastation Putin’s military campaign has already caused to its neighboring country was of no concern to the pro-Putin pundits. In a glib and nonchalant manner, Soloviev noted: “Ukraine is sinking into the stone age. Most of its territories are on the verge of a humanitarian catastrophe.” Nonetheless, he encouraged the Russian government not to stop their “military operation,” known in the rest of the world as brutal, unprovoked war.

Soloviev added: “It should be understood that this is not a war against Ukraine or the Ukrainian people, but a military operation... of denazification and demilitarization of NATO’s fist that was directed at us.” Zatulin chimed in: “This is a war against the West, a war against NATO.” The host agreed: “Of course. This is a battle from the war that started on May 9, 1945, when they—pretending that they’re with us—were getting ready to destroy us.”

Like a mantra, state television talking heads are making references to World War II, invoking the spirit of a fight against Nazism for no other reason but to whitewash Putin’s latest land grab in progress.

Lawmakers and pundits essentially debunked Putin’s claim that he invaded Ukraine to remove what he said is a “Nazi” government—which is, incidentally, headed by a Jewish man. Instead of demystifying the Kremlin’s agenda for the masses, state media demonstrated that in Putin’s Russia, anyone who dares to oppose Putin is described as a “Nazi,” to the point where the term is devoid of its original meaning.

On Soloviev’s show, political scientist and professor of history Elena Ponomareva asserted: “We’re fighting not only against NATO, but also against the Nazi European Union.”

Two days earlier, on a state TV show *60 Minutes*, journalist Andrei Sidorchik rode the concept all the way down the hill when he [exclaimed](#): “Joe Biden is a Nazi. The U.S. congressmen—Democrat and Republican—are Nazis... German chancellor is a Nazi... EU leaders are Nazis... because their sanctions are attempting to preserve neo-Nazism in Ukraine.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Experts: ‘natural experiment’ ditching mask
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/what-health-experts-say-about-the-natural-experiment-of-ditching-mask-mandates-in-wa/
GIST	<p>Most of Washington’s indoor masking requirements will soon come to an end — and the state’s “natural experiment” will begin.</p> <p>For nearly two years Washingtonians have been mandated, off and on, to wear face coverings in schools, businesses, restaurants, bars, gyms and other indoor spaces. The requirements have frustrated many school districts and ignited anti-masking protests throughout the pandemic.</p> <p>Now as COVID-19 infection and hospitalization rates continue to fall, some questions remain about how to best transition back into maskless communities. Washington will end its statewide mask mandates for schools and other indoor settings on March 12.</p> <p>This week, two local infectious disease experts, Dr. Joshua Schiffer and Dr. Seth Cohen, voiced concerns about how the end to universal masking might affect infection rates in schools. Yet neither had big issues with the timing of the end of masking.</p> <p>Both plan to continue wearing face coverings in public indoor spaces for now, and encouraged others to do the same, particularly if they’re immunocompromised or unvaccinated.</p> <p>Schiffer is a clinical research professor of vaccines and infectious diseases at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and Cohen is a medical director for infection prevention at the University of Washington Medical Center.</p> <p>These conversations have been edited for clarity and brevity.</p>

When you heard the mask mandates were ending, what was your initial reaction?

Schiffer: It's definitely what I'd call a natural experiment. From a purist point of view, if everyone wore masks going forward for the remainder of time, there would be less transmission and fewer hospitalizations and deaths. But I think all of us in the field understand that a pretty substantial segment of the population is sick of masks. So politicians need to be cognizant of that and account for all of these factors.

But purely speaking, it's a tool that prevents transmission. I'm not advocating for keeping the mandates forever and, in fact, I personally think the timing is just fine, but very purely speaking, they would continue to provide protection against SARS-CoV-2 and other respiratory viruses.

Cohen: It's a big change for us in health care. We're fortunate in our own local community that vaccination rates are relatively high in King County and that means the majority of new COVID cases won't become (severe), which is great.

I think the challenge is that there are still a lot of people out there in the community — including those with underlying medical conditions, people with compromised immune systems, people who are unvaccinated and children — who may be at higher risk of contracting COVID and developing subsequent infections, and so my biggest concern with this new phase is the feeling that we may be leaving behind people.

Even though masks have become a political flashpoint, it's really easy to forget that they also serve to protect people who may be more vulnerable or may be at risk for developing complications to COVID. And so for that reason, I will personally still be masking up in crowded spaces for the time being.

According to the CDC's [new classifications of risk level by county](#), different parts of our state have different levels of COVID risk. Is there any particular masking guidance for those traveling between Washington counties?

Cohen: I think it's really important to point out that the CDC guidance weighs hospital capacity and doesn't predict individual outcomes. If somebody feels that they're at risk for acquiring COVID or having complications due to COVID, that should take precedence and make people think very strongly about masking.

Schiffer: I really like the idea of shaping the policy according to the burden of disease in a given community, and I also think the county level is the most appropriate unit to base this on. If you just look at the risk of counties across multiple states, including Washington, it's not homogeneous. So I think it makes sense to cater the policy toward the level of risk in a given county.

I also think it's increasingly going to be an individualized decision that's based on, first of all, the level of risk of getting infected in the first place, which is directly proportional to the number of cases in a community. Also, the level of an individual's risk of getting infected. So unfortunately people who are immunocompromised due to cancer treatments or transplantation treatments or HIV, for example, might wish to continue to be more careful than someone who's young and otherwise healthy and has been boosted.

What concerns do you have about the end of mask mandates?

Schiffer: There's still not a great solution for what to do for children under the age of 5 (who [aren't yet eligible for COVID vaccinations](#)). And I think the other potential problem is that hospitalization makes a lot of sense for a metric to follow, but its one shortcoming is it tends to lag behind cases. So if there was a surge in cases, and we waited to react until there was a surge in hospitalizations, we might lose some of the beneficial effect of masks.

But if you consider the alternatives, there's almost no way to create a list of policies at this point that don't fail in one respect or another. So some of these decisions are clearly a bit arbitrary and clearly a bit politically motivated, but I also think there's not a perfect solution at this point.

Cohen: It's nice to have one uniform expectation for mask-wearing when you're in a school. I think it's harder to get kids to wear masks properly when there's no way to enforce that behavior, even if there are kids in the class who are at high-risk of COVID-19. So I do worry about peer pressure in schools and having masking behavior slip, and that's one place where particularly if kids are undervaccinated, we may see more transmission.

Do you think it's possible mask mandates could return if COVID trends worsen?

Cohen: COVID is completely unpredictable. We have more tools and it's important to note that masking is just one layer of protection. But it's possible there will be another variant at this point — we just don't know.

And if we do see another surge, I certainly hope that people would be open to the possibility of needing to mask back up to protect themselves and protect our community and protect our health care system, which was at a really fragile place in January.

Schiffer: I don't think there's really anybody who knows what's going to happen in the next six months and so if another variant pops up, or if relaxing to this degree allows omicron to re-emerge, then I think we have to be flexible. It's still an important tool I hope we have the ability to use if there's a bump in cases that pops up and any time during the next year.

Like everyone else, I hope not. But nobody knows what's going to happen. There may be a need to, not permanently, reintroduce masking at a broad scale.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Droughts continue in the Pacific Northwest
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/environment/droughts-continue-in-the-pacific-northwest-despite-early-snow-and-rain/
GIST	<p>Droughts have reached historic levels in recent years in the Pacific Northwest, but scientists say this year could be considerably milder for Washington than for its neighbors, central Oregon and southern Idaho.</p> <p>Nearly three quarters of the Pacific Northwest is parched, with 19% suffering extreme or exceptional droughts, according to February figures from the U.S. Drought Monitor.</p> <p>In Washington, the worst droughts in early March were seen in Benton, Klickitat, Yakima, Kittitas and Grant counties.</p> <p>Despite heavy precipitation and icy weather toward the beginning of the year — not to mention sporadic rain over the past week — water deficits over time are causing concern.</p> <p>Drier years have added up, especially the past two, and water reservoirs are seeing annual shortfalls which could spell trouble come wildfire season.</p> <p>“Part of the problem here is the long-term precipitation deficits that we’ve had,” said Nick Bond, Washington state climatologist at the University of Washington, during a press briefing on Thursday. “But there’s no indication that we will suffer through as warm and dry a spring as we had last year.”</p> <p>On Jan. 11, average statewide snowpack was 133% of normal, according to Karin Bumbaco, assistant Washington state climatologist at the UW.</p> <p>As of Thursday morning, however, the northern Cascades and other basins around the state started to lag in precipitation, so the statewide average dropped to 89%.</p> <p>Last year, an unprecedented heat wave brought record-breaking drought, wildfires and heavy use of water reservoirs throughout the state.</p>

In June, the blistering “heat dome” triggered record-breaking temperatures in Washington, Oregon and parts of British Columbia. Research later found it was a “once in a millennium” event made 150 times likelier by climate change.

By the middle of this century, climate change could trigger a heat wave of that severity every five to 10 years, but that’s not the new normal, Bond said.

“I would be astonished if we had anything of that severity this year,” Bond said.

By mid-June, Washington had responded to at least 410 fires on state lands, according to state Public Lands Commissioner Hilary Franz.

A brush fire in Chelan County covering more than 9,000 acres threatened a thousand homes, while a trio of fires in Okanogan County prompted evacuations in several areas.

Roughly a month later, Gov. Jay Inslee declared a drought emergency in Washington — though the order excluded Seattle, Everett and Tacoma because those areas have municipal water storage — to combat the state’s second driest spring on record since 1895. Water supplies were projected by the governor’s office to reach 75% of average.

Scientists believe this year’s drought won’t be quite as bad, but say precautions need to be taken to prepare for water shortages and wildfires.

While neighboring states could suffer greater drought this year, scientists pointed out that Washington, Oregon and Idaho all belong to the same region.

“We’re in it together,” Bumbaco said. “As a region.”

La Niña might be responsible for why Washington is poised to fare better this year in terms of drought, because it shifted the location and movement of a high-pressure ridge west of the Cascades — a significant change that may have impacted precipitation patterns.

But scientists said it’s difficult to say for certain.

“Stuff happens,” Bond said.

[Return to Top](#)

Cyber Awareness

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Anonymous ops: oppose the genocide
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/anonymous-ops-inject-information-into-russia-with-media-hacks-millions-of-text-messages/
GIST	<p>As President Vladimir Putin has tried to keep Russians on a diet of force-fed state propaganda about the invasion of Ukraine, hackers have used their access to broadcast the truth about Putin’s war to the citizenry and call on Russians to “oppose the genocide.”</p> <p>And many who have wanted to participate in the #OpRussia campaign but lack hacking skills have reportedly answered the call to use an Anonymous-created tool to send millions of text messages with hard facts about the Ukraine invasion to random Russians.</p> <p>On Friday, state communications watchdog Roskomnadzor said it blocked Facebook and Twitter as the Putin regime has tried to stifle the free flow of information on social media. Putin also signed a bill that was jammed through by pro-Kremlin lawmakers to penalize with up to 15 years in prison those</p>

disseminating information about the war that doesn't fit the Kremlin's disinformation narrative. Russia is also requiring all servers and domains to be transferred to a Russian intranet by March 11.

Major news networks decided to stop broadcasting in Russia or have suspended operations there. Tik-Tok said it was suspending some of its services out of concern for its employees and users in light of the new law.

The hacking collective Anonymous launched a cyber offensive against Russia 10 days ago in response to the Ukraine invasion, and today announced that hackers breached Russian streaming services Wink and Ivi and live broadcasts on TV stations Russia 24, Channel One, and Moscow 24 to broadcast war footage from Ukraine.

The hack included a text message on the screen calling on Russians to stand up against Putin's war: "We are ordinary citizens of Russia. We oppose the war on the territory of Ukraine. Russia and the Russians against the war! This war was waged by Putin's criminal, authoritarian regime on behalf of ordinary Russian citizens. Russians, oppose the genocide in Ukraine."

A prominent Anonymous Twitter account also reported that all Russian state TV channels had been hacked, and the Russia Today (RT) France channel "was also hacked on the Russian Express satellite," broadcasting footage of a Russian missile strike.

Others participating in the #OpRussia campaign have been painstakingly going one small screen at a time to get the truth to Russian citizens.

Anonymous programmers Squad303 created a tool that allows non-hackers to make a positive contribution to "the largest and most successful cyber operation in the history of the world."

"Squad303 focused on nonviolent information campaigns by enabling people from all over the world to send text messages to randomly selected Russians," the group said in a video posted on Twitter today. "For this purpose we have created the 1920.in tool. Within 48 hours the people of the free world sent the Russians 2 million text messages on their cell phones. Thank you for that! Don't stop! Ukrainians are fighting with real guns. We can at least with our smartphones."

The project is named after the Battle of Warsaw, or Miracle on the Vistula, in which Poles defeated the Soviet Red Army in August 1920. "Every day the citizens of Ukraine prove that this miracle can happen again," Squad303 added. "Let's help them!"

Participants in the campaign urged others on social media to make the messages personable, include a flag from the sender's country, include pictures or video, and to be respectful if the recipient of the text message engages the sender.

A UK Anonymous account later posted an update that more than 3 million text messages had been sent to Russians by global campaigners, even though 1920.in was targeted with a DDoS attack. "Mr Putin does not like us very much," Squad303 tweeted in response to the Russian cyber assault.

On Saturday, Anonymous hackers claimed that Russian search engine Yandex was hacked, "leaking data of 150k users with mail & password, incl. verified accounts." As with other data breaches conducted by the collective in these cyber operations, the files were posted online.

Anonymous accounts have also encouraged those without hacking skills to join Russian social media sites and spread information to counter Russia's disinformation or lack of news about what is really happening in Ukraine. Supporters were also urged to hijack hashtags that were trending on Twitter late last week in support of Russia and President Vladimir Putin, and use them to distribute content showing the truth about Russia's attack on Ukraine.

	<p>On Thursday, Anonymous said that more than 2,500 websites linked to the Russian and Belarusian governments along with state-run media, banks, hospitals, airports, and companies have been hacked in the week since the Anonymous collective declared that they launched cyber operations against Russia.</p> <p>The antiwar hackers have also gone after pro-Russian hackers, swiping and leaking thousands of internal chats from the Conti ransomware group, as well as military communications and more. Anons also said pro-Russian elements were circulating a hit list to report their social media accounts en masse, trying to get #OpRussia hackers deplatformed.</p> <p>Hackers were using #OpRussia, #OpKremlin, and similar hashtags to announce actions against Russian sites, similar to the #OpISIS campaign that targets the terror group's deluge of online propaganda and the #OpKKK campaign that targets white supremacists.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 China social media censors kept busy
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2022/03/the-war-in-ukraine-is-keeping-chinese-social-media-censors-busy/
GIST	<p>“Artillery fire lights up the sky and breaks my heart. I hope my compatriots in Ukraine are taking care of themselves and their families,” said a user on Weibo, often called China’s Twitter, on February 27. The message was quickly blocked, according to Free Weibo, a service of Great Fire, which tracks Chinese censorship online.</p> <p>Two days later, a very different message appeared on Weibo: “I support fighting! America and Taiwan have gone too far.” That, too, was blocked, according to Free Weibo.</p> <p>The messages—and their quick disappearance—show how Chinese social media platforms find themselves in the crosshairs of the Russia-Ukraine war. The platforms must be sure to toe the official line amid subtle shifts in China’s position. Their responses could be an early test of new rules governing how companies use algorithms, which may make them responsible for trending topics and fake news appearing on their sites.</p> <p>In general, Chinese online platforms receive daily guidance from the government about what sort of content to remove, says Yuqi Na, a researcher in media and communications at the University of Westminster.</p> <p>A hint of how that works emerged in the days leading up to the invasion. On February 22, a Chinese outlet called Horizon News briefly posted, probably by accident, what appear to be internal instructions for how to spin the Ukraine crisis on its official Weibo account. Among the supposed rules: “Do not post anything unfavorable to Russia or pro-Western.”</p> <p>The instructions also said to monitor comments and only use hashtags started by state outlets Xinhua, CCTV, or <i>People’s Daily</i>, according to China Digital Times. That sort of direction to follow the lead of major state outlets is common, says Maria Repnikova, an assistant professor in global communication at Georgia State University and author of Chinese Soft Power.</p> <p>Prior to the invasion, Chinese state media outlets and officials’ Twitter accounts repeated a drumbeat of US warmongering, and brushed off the possibility of an invasion. Once the assault began, China was put in the awkward position of having to reconcile its long-standing policy of noninterference and respecting national sovereignty with its ties to Russia. Just weeks earlier, the two countries reaffirmed their relationship when Russian President Vladimir Putin was a VIP guest at the Beijing Winter Olympics.</p> <p>In the early days of the war, Chinese state media seemed surprised and took a cautious approach. The relatively sparse coverage largely echoed Russian outlets, calling the conflict a “special military operation” and placing the blame on the US and NATO. “It’s quite intentional,” says Na. “A lot of Internet users buy into that narrative when it’s their main information source.”</p>

In that environment, [pro-Russia and nationalist discourse](#) flourished. Putin's February 24 speech justifying the invasion went viral, says Aliaksandr Herasimenka, director of research at the Oxford Internet Institute's Program on Democracy and Technology. Social media companies let pro-war posts thrive, as well as some [sexist posts](#) by Chinese men pining for Ukrainian refugee brides.

At the same time, there was an outpouring of [sympathy](#) for Ukrainians on platforms such as Weibo and Weixin, a widely used chat and news app—but many of those posts disappeared once they became popular. Twitter users [documented posts](#) that were [taken down](#), including posts depicting antiwar protests in other countries.

“Across Chinese social media, you’ve got the official narrative, but you’ve also got a lot of counternarratives circulating, even if they get shut down as quickly as they go up,” Anthony Saich, director of Harvard’s Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, said at a talk on Thursday. “It clearly shows that people in China have a varied view of this. Some are disturbed about the long-term consequences.”

Saich noted that a February 26 statement by five Chinese professors condemning the war circulated widely before it was taken down. The statement offered a surprisingly direct challenge to the official position, [saying in part](#), “Regardless of Russia's myriad reasons and all kinds of excuses, the use of force to invade a sovereign country is trampling on the norms of international relations based on the UN Charter.”

Since then, social media companies appear to be walking a thin line, trying to cool the most bellicose rhetoric without crossing any red lines, in particular with criticism of Russia.

Over the weekend, China began casting itself as a mediator and calling for a peaceful resolution in public statements. Some official coverage became more sympathetic to Ukraine, says Repnikova. CGTN, China's international TV station, has aired coverage of the [destruction in Ukraine](#) and the impact on civilians.

On Sunday, [several social media platforms](#) took measures to turn down the volume, saying they had removed fake news and inappropriate speech, including posts promoting war. Weibo, for example, said it [temporarily suspended or deleted 10,000 accounts](#) and said users should be “objective” and “reasonable,” because “a peaceful environment is hard to come by.”

There's still plenty of blame shifted to the West, in particular the US and NATO, and open criticism of Russia appears to be off the table. On Tuesday, popular TV host and transgender artist Jin Xing said her [Weibo account was blocked](#) after she spoke out against the war and [called Putin “crazy.”](#) And some netizens have argued, echoing reports in official media, that the foreign media's portrayal of China as pro-Russia is [endangering the safety](#) of Chinese citizens who remain in Ukraine.

“The state is now trying to tone down the pro-war sentiments, but it would be difficult for them to condemn Russia. The message is consistent: condemn the US hegemony and dominance, especially regarding human rights issues,” says Na. “This is some kind of bottom line.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Adafruit discloses data leak
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/adafruit-discloses-data-leak-from-ex-employees-github-repo/
GIST	Adafruit has disclosed a data leak that occurred due to a publicly-viewable GitHub repository. The company suspects this could have allowed "unauthorized access" to information about certain users on or before 2019.

Based in New York City, Adafruit is a producer of open-source hardware components since 2005. The company designs, manufactures, and sells electronics products, tools, and accessories.

Ex-employee's GitHub repo had real customer data

On Friday, March 4th, Adafruit announced that a publicly-accessible GitHub repository contained a data set comprising information on some user accounts. This information included:

- names
- email addresses
- shipping/billing addresses
- order details
- order placement status via payment processor or PayPal

The data set, according to Adafruit, did not contain any user passwords or financial information such as credit cards. However, the exposure of real user data, including order details, could be used by spammers and phishing actors to target Adafruit's customers.

Interestingly, the data leak did not occur from Adafruit's GitHub repository but that of a former employee. It appears that a former employee was using real customer information for training and data analysis operations in their GitHub repo.

"Within 15 minutes of being notified about the inadvertent disclosure, Adafruit worked with the former employee, deleted the relevant GitHub repository and the Adafruit team began the forensic process to determine what and if there was any access and what type of data was involved," [explained](#) the company.

Users demand proper notifications

At this time, Adafruit is not aware of the exposed information being misused by an adversary and claims it's disclosing the incident "for transparency and accountability."

The company has, however, decided not to email every user about the incident.

Adafruit explains that although all security disclosures are published on the company's blog and security pages, there is no action for the users to perform as no passwords or payment card information were exposed in the data analysis set.

"We evaluated the risk and consulted with our privacy lawyers and legal experts, and took the approach that we thought appropriately mitigated any issues while being open and transparent and did not believe emailing directly was helpful in this case," state Adafruit's Managing Director Phillip Torrone, and founder Limor "Ladyada" Fried.

But, not all Adafruit customers are convinced, with some demanding email notifications be sent out with regards to the incident...

A major concern among users is the presence of real customer information in a former team member's GitHub repo, as opposed to using automatically-generated "fake" staging data. And, how this information could be misused by phishing actors...

It is worth noting, keeping real customer data in GitHub repositories, even private ones, is a risky decision. Last year, e-commerce giant Mercari had suffered a data leak via their private [GitHub repo exposing over 17,000 customer records](#) including banking information. Rapid7 also suffered a data leak via private GitHub repo impacting a "[small subset of customers](#)."

"We are additionally putting in place more protocols and access controls to avoid any possible future data exposure and limiting access for employee training use," says Adafruit.

	<p>Users should remain vigilant for any phishing scams or communications they may receive impersonating Adafruit staff. The company especially cautions against bogus "password reset" alerts that may entice victims into giving away their passwords.</p> <p>Adafruit requests that concerns related to any such suspicious emails or unauthorized access attempts by threat actors be directed to security@adafruit.com.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/04 Meris botnet embeds REvil ransom notes
SOURCE	https://threatpost.com/massive-meris-botnet-embeds-ransomware-notes-revil/178769/?web_view=true
GIST	<p>Hey webop_geeks, you_are_already_dead, a note claiming to be left by the REvil ransomware gang declared, embedded into the attack itself as a string of text in the URL for the extortion demand.</p> <p>Imperva reported the interesting twist on Friday – one of several it’s seen in the evolution of distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks so far this year.</p> <p>In a post that detailed mitigation of a recent attack that hit up to 2.5 Mrps (millions of requests per second) on a single website, Imperva’s Nelli Klepfish shared several chest-thumping ransom notes – a screen capture of one is included below – that its targeted customer received before the attack started.</p> <p>“We are observing more cases like this where the ransom note has been included as part of the attack itself, perhaps as a reminder to the target to send their bitcoin payment,” Klepfish wrote. “Of course, once the target receives this note, the attack is already underway, adding a sense of urgency to the threat.”</p> <p>This was only one of several threatening ransom notes the target received before the 2.5 Mrps DDoS attack began, and the specific message shown above was one of more than 12 million embedded requests that targeted random pages on the same site.</p> <p>The 2.5 Mbps attack was the highest pitter-patter Imperva’s ever wrangled, but it’s nowhere near the highest ever. That undesirable trophy likely goes to the 2.5 Tbps DDoS that hit Google in September 2017, sending 167 Mps to 180,000 exposed CLDAP, DNS, and SNMP servers that turned around and sent back big, choke-you packets.</p> <p>“While ransom DDoS attacks are not new, they appear to be evolving and becoming more interesting with time and with each new phase,” Imperva observed.</p> <p>Another threatening message, shown below, told “webops_geeks” to inform their bosses that they’d need to start coughing up 1 Bitcoin a day – worth the tidy sum of about USD \$40K, as of Friday – if they wanted to stay online. It, and other embedded messages, were signed “revil_this_is_our_dominion.”</p> <p>Whether or not the attacks have anything to do with the REvil ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) gang or are just coming from an imposter is anybody’s guess. Russia made a show of busting up REvil in January, with its Federal Security Service (FSB) claiming to have raided gang hideouts; seized currency, cars and personnel; and neutralized REvil’s infrastructure at the request of the United States. But as these things go, cybercrook gangs are like blobs of jelly: You squeeze one end, and the action pops up somewhere else as members join other cybercriminal gangs.</p> <p>REvil does have a history of DDoS ransomware, though. In October 2021, a British voice-over-IP (VoIP) firm – Voice Unlimited – was still recuperating a month after a series of apparent sustained DDoS attacks that were attributed to REvil.</p> <p>Threatening to Tank Victim’s Stocks</p> <p>The next day, the attackers sent over 15 million requests to the same site, this time with a new message that warned the CEO that the attackers would eviscerate the company’s stock price by “hundreds of millions in market cap.”</p>

The attacks kept coming for several days, lasting up to several hours and, in 20 percent of cases, hitting between 90 and 750 thousand requests per second (Kbps).

Born of the Brawny Meris Botnet

Evidence points to the DDoS attacks coming from the massive Meris botnet. Meris sucks its power out of the thousands of internet-of-things (IoT) devices that have been hijacked thanks to a years-old [vulnerability](#), tracked as CVE-2018-14847, in MicroTik routers.

“Although CVE-2018-14847 was published a while ago, attackers can still take advantage of it,” Imperva pointed out.

And how. The Meris botnet was behind the record-breaking DDoS attack that [targeted](#) Russia’s version of Google – Yandex – in September 2021. Other targets for Meris in 2021 included cybersecurity media sites Krebs on Security and Infosecurity, as well as New Zealand banks, its post mail service and the country’s MetService weather service.

They’re all cases in point for the fact that DDoS attacks [shattered records](#) in Q3.

While the largest attack to hit Imperva’s customer reached 2.5 Mrps, the company blocked over 64 million requests in under one minute....

The top originating countries were Indonesia and the United States.... “We have seen a pattern emerging of almost identical source locations for different attacks, indicating that the same botnet was used many times,” Imperva said.

The attacks took only seconds to mitigate, given that the sources, which impersonated legitimate browsers or a Google bot, were known to be malicious.

The threat actors focused on business sales and communications sites, mainly based in the United States or Europe, that had the commonality of being exchange-listed. All the better to scare you with threats to stock price, my dear, Imperva noted: “The threat actors use this to their advantage by referring to the potential damage a DDoS attack could do to the company stock price.”

Now is the time to prepare for an attack, Imperva warned, particularly given the threat actors’ promise – be they REvil or REvil wannabes – to keep hammering away.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Ukraine in NATO intel-sharing cyberdefense
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/government/ukraine-to-join-nato-intel-sharing-cyberdefense-hub/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>While Ukraine is yet to become a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the country has been accepted as a contributing participant to the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE).</p> <p>CCDCOE is a NATO-accredited cyberdefense hub that member nations use for research, training, and exercises covering several areas, including technology, strategy, operations, and law.</p> <p>Although this does not make Ukraine a NATO member, it will likely tighten collaboration and allow it to gain access to NATO member nations' cyber-expertise and share its own.</p> <p>"Ukraine's presence in the Centre will enhance the exchange of cyber expertise, between Ukraine and CCDCOE member nations," said Colonel Jaak Tarien, Director of NATO CCDCOE.</p>

	<p>"Ukraine could bring valuable first-hand knowledge of several adversaries within the cyber domain to be used for research, exercises and training,"</p> <p>Minister of Defence of Estonia Kalle Laanet added that Ukraine "has valuable experience from previous cyber-attacks to provide significant value to the NATO CCDCOE."</p> <p>Ukraine's path to becoming a NATO member</p> <p>Ukraine's first attempt to join the Alliance was refused at the 2008 Bucharest Summit after strong objections from Russia.</p> <p>However, NATO pledged that the country would eventually become a member and participate in the Membership Action Plan (MAP), the first step on the path to full membership.</p> <p>Thirteen years later, NATO re-confirmed during a June 2021 summit that Ukraine will join NATO and become a member of the Alliance after going through the Membership Action Plan "as an integral part of the process."</p> <p>"Commend NATO partners' understanding of all the risks and challenges we face," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.</p> <p>"NATO leaders confirmed that Ukraine will become a member of the Alliance and the MAP is an integral part of the membership process. Ukraine deserves due appreciation of its role in ensuring Euro-Atlantic security."</p> <p>U.S. Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken revealed during a Friday press availability in Brussels that "every NATO ally is providing either military or humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Most are providing both."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/04 Hackers claim Samsung data, code leak
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/hackers-leak-190gb-of-alleged-samsung-data-source-code/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>The Lapsus\$ data extortion group leaked today a huge collection of confidential data they claim to be from Samsung Electronics, the South Korean giant consumer electronics company.</p> <p>The leak comes less than a week after Lapsus\$ released a 20GB document archive from 1TB of data stolen from Nvidia GPU designer.</p> <p>Gang teases Samsung data leak</p> <p>In a note posted earlier today, the extortion gang teased about releasing Samsung data with a snapshot of C/C++ directives in Samsung software.</p> <p>Shortly after teasing their followers, Lapsus\$ published a description of the upcoming leak, saying that it contains "confidential Samsung source code" originating from a breach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • source code for every Trusted Applet (TA) installed in Samsung's TrustZone environment used for sensitive operations (e.g. hardware cryptography, binary encryption, access control) • algorithms for all biometric unlock operations • bootloader source code for all recent Samsung devices • confidential source code from Qualcomm • source code for Samsung's activation servers • full source code for technology used for authorizing and authenticating Samsung accounts, including APIs and services <p>If the details above are accurate, Samsung has suffered a major data breach that could cause huge damage to the company.</p>

	<p>Lapsus\$ split the leaked data in three compressed files that add to almost 190GB and made them available in a torrent that appears to be highly popular, with more than 400 peers sharing the content. The extortion group also said that it would deploy more servers to increase the download speed.</p> <p>Included in the torrent is also a brief description for the content available in each of the three archives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part 1 contains a dump of source code and related data about Security/Defense/Knox/Bootloader/TrustedApps and various other items • Part 2 contains a dump of source code and related data about device security and encryption • Part 3 contains various repositories from Samsung Github: mobile defense engineering, Samsung account backend, Samsung pass backend/frontend, and SES (Bixby, Smartthings, store) <p>It is unclear if Lapsus\$ contacted Samsung for a ransom, as they claimed in the case of Nvidia.</p> <p>BleepingComputer has contacted Samsung for a statement about the Lapsus\$ data leak and will update the article when the company replies.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 UK experts: Russia 'Covid for computers'
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/porn-covid-computers-hacking/2022/03/06/id/1059878/
GIST	<p>As the United Kingdom is "braced" for a cyberattack from Russia for aiding Ukraine, cyber spies are warning Russia has developed so-called "COVID for computers" malware that uses porn to cripple phones and internet devices.</p> <p>"One click on an enticing video is enough to introduce malware into your computer or mobile," a former cyber spy told the U.K.'s "Sunday Mirror." "The advice for safe cyber sex is the same as for real sex – use protection."</p> <p>That includes having cyber security software and updating the patches.</p> <p>Russia has reportedly been working the hacking tools for decades, threatening to infect millions in the U.K.</p> <p>Notably, according to the Mirror, in January, Russia tested having its internet disconnected from the rest of the world in anticipation of a cyber war.</p> <p>Similarly, the malware cuts off a user's access to the internet, including Google, Instagram, messaging services, and access to bank accounts, The Sun reported.</p> <p>Russian cyber attackers can also cut off "critical infrastructure" like power and water utilities, according to the report.</p> <p>"The main objective of a cyberattack is to cause maximum disruption, confusion, fear and chaos," Glasswall head of cybersecurity Danny Lopez told the Sunday Times.</p> <p>"A power cut, or, say, a loss of critical record access at a hospital, for instance, could unfortunately have a serious impact on our lives," he said.</p> <p>A senior U.K. intelligence source is surprised the hacking has yet to commence, The Sun reported.</p> <p>"We're braced for a cyber attack," the source said. "We know they have experience and capability in this area, but we can't work out why they haven't done it yet."</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 Tacoma, Pierce Co. brace for cyberattacks
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/article259064318.html

GIST	<p>Following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, local governments in Pierce County are preparing for possible cyber attacks on internet, transportation and wastewater treatment plant systems.</p> <p>In the past year, Russian hackers hit a large oil pipeline in Houston, one of the country’s largest meat plants and local school district Clover Park.</p> <p>Security experts told USA Today that because the United States has placed sanctions on Russia, it’s only a matter of time until the nation is targeted more directly.</p> <p>Emergency management officials throughout Washington were made aware of the potential for cyber attacks on critical infrastructure, Tacoma’s Emergency Management division said recently.</p> <p>“In response, departments within the city were encouraged to consider how they were sending and storing information and to be mindful of those critical systems that could be a potential focal point for a cyberattack,” the division said.</p> <p>Tacoma staff have been encouraged to be careful of sending some information over email and to be aware of phishing attempts. Tacoma’s Emergency Management division said if changes needed to be made, staff were “encouraged to do so until the perceived threat of a cyberattack was not as concerning as it is currently.”</p> <p>There are no credible specific threats to Pierce County.</p> <p>“We are working with regional, state and federal partners to monitor and address any activity,” Emergency Management spokesperson Mike Halliday said.</p> <p>Tacoma declined to share whether there has been a credible cyber-security threat to the city’s infrastructure.</p> <p>“The city regularly evaluates and modifies its security profile to ensure common and critical systems are protected,” the city’s emergency management staff said. “Information regarding whether or not changes are made are a fundamental part of that security effort and, therefore, are not shared outside of the organization.”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/05 Gig app gathering data prompts concerns
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/gig-app-gathering-data-for-u-s-military-others-prompts-safety-concerns-11646481601
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—In 2019, Ukrainian users of a U.S.-based mobile-phone app offering paid, short-term tasks got what sounded like a straightforward assignment: Go into rural Ukraine and take smartphone photos of certain fields and farms around Odessa and Kyiv.</p> <p>But for one contributor, the job turned out to be anything but ordinary when one of the fields turned out to lie next to a military checkpoint. The contributor was chased off by armed soldiers, according to people familiar with the matter. The app’s owner, Premise Data Corp., said it immediately deleted the task from its platform after learning of the military checkpoint.</p> <p>What that and other Ukrainian gig workers were doing was harvesting data for a U.S. Defense Department-funded research project. Descartes Labs, a government contractor that works with U.S. military and intelligence agencies, hired Premise to have its gig workers gauge how accurately the company’s satellite algorithms were performing, the people said. Could they, for example, accurately tell barley from wheat in photos taken from space? Descartes’s work was funded by DARPA, a research arm of the Pentagon, a Defense Department spokesperson said. Descartes declined to comment.</p>

Based in San Francisco, Premise is one of a number of companies offering a service that uses iPhone and Android smartphones around the world as tools for gathering intelligence and commercial information from afar, sometimes without the users knowing specifically who they are working for. The business model of companies like Premise has prompted questions about the safety and propriety of enlisting such people for government work—especially in potential or active conflict zones.

Such safety concerns were on display last week when the Ukrainian ministry of defense accused the company's gig workers of being agents of Russia after false reports circulated on social media that Moscow was using the app to mark targets for military strikes. Premise said its work in Ukraine was on behalf of a U.S. government agency, a Western European government and some private clients, adding it wasn't allowed to be more specific under the terms of its client agreements. "We need to get the message back to Ukraine that we're good guys, not bad guys," Premise CEO Maury Blackman said.

Bogdan Kulynych, a Ukrainian Ph.D. candidate who works on privacy and security issues, drew attention to the app's work in his country in a series of viral tweets, calling Premise's activities in a war zone "a very bad idea."

"Ukrainian society is rightfully on the edge," he wrote on Twitter. "I think that paying locals literally pennies to engage in suspicious activities that could get them detained, or worse, is harmful."

A Premise spokesman said the company had been the target of a disinformation campaign and had expressed its concerns to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Google [halted Android users' ability to download the app in Ukraine](#) for several days before reversing itself this week. Google and the FBI didn't respond to requests for comment.

Premise and apps like it are windows into the global geopolitical competition for user data playing out on personal computers and smart devices. The U.S. Defense Department [is investing heavily in open-source intelligence](#)—including the kind of unclassified data that Premise collects. A top defense-intelligence official said at a conference in December that 80% of what is in intelligence reports now comes from unclassified sources.

The clients for Premise's data include an array of military commands—often entities responsible for intelligence gathering or operations planning. Premise has provided data to U.S. Army Intelligence in Europe, according to contracting documents viewed by The Wall Street Journal. Numerous units of the U.S. Special Operations Command, or SOCOM, have also been Premise customers, documents show. Premise also received funding to work with a technology incubator affiliated with SOCOM. The work entailed assessing how Premise's data could be useful in planning tactical raids against high-value targets, documents show. SOCOM didn't respond to requests for comment. U.S. Army intelligence said it used Premise in 2020 and 2021 but determined it didn't fit the unit's needs.

Premise told the Journal last year that about half of its customers were private corporations. However, people familiar with the company say the overwhelming majority of the company's revenue has come in recent years from defense and intelligence work from U.S. and allied governments. At times, company leaders emphasized that the commercial work served as an important cover for the company's government data collection, some of those people said—an accusation the company denies.

Mr. Blackman said revenue from commercial clients is growing and the company was pursuing them "as our primary market." Premise declined to share the company's revenues or financial projections with the Journal.

"Our contributors gather only publicly accessible data through photos of public places, as any tourist can do. The tasks that our contributors choose from are all publicly available and accessible from the Premise application, which is available for free to all to view on the app stores. Further, we disclose to our contributors in our terms of service that the data they collect can be sold to our customers. We provide data so that our customers, including private companies, nonprofits, and government departments, can better understand the world," Mr. Blackman said.

To build its public-sector business, Premise launched a network in Russia that can be tasked to do data collection or observation, according to people familiar with the matter who say it was set up primarily to solicit gig workers in Russian cities and enable U.S. and allied governments to collect data from afar. Premise said it has contributors in Russia but denied they were primarily for government customers.

Premise also explored whether to enter the Chinese and Iranian markets but decided against it, according to the company. “Our goal is to learn as much as we can about the world, and the world does not just include democratic, Western developed nations,” a spokesman for the company said.

Premise said it works only with publicly accessible data, but many of its contracts viewed by the Journal show that some personnel are required to obtain top-secret security clearance and that its data is being used in classified programs. The company said some of its employees “are required to have security clearances to work in that customer’s facilities and interact with that customer’s employees. This does not contradict the irrefutable fact that 100% of the data our contributors collect is publicly available data.”

One product Premise advertises to public-sector customers is the ability to do covert signal monitoring using the sensors on a user’s smartphone to understand nearby cellular towers and wireless networks, the people said. That kind of data turns a phone into a remote sensor that can be used to do basic digital reconnaissance in advance of a more sophisticated intrusion such as a hack or to figure out how to jam communications in advance of a raid.

Premise experienced a significant exodus of employees as defense work grew to be a larger share of its portfolio around 2018, people familiar with the matter said. Some employees expressed concern to management that the app was asking contributors to take on potentially dangerous situations including photographing flooding in Vietnam, gang activity in Central America or ports in Asia, the people said. The company, which has said some of its former employees were disgruntled, has brought lawsuits against some of them for disparaging the company. Some of those suits have been dismissed and others are ongoing.

The company said it was aware of the arrest of about two dozen Premise users while performing tasks, out of what it said was a total user base of 3.5 million over the last three years. They include a Malawian arrested on suspicion of black magic in rural Africa and a Palestinian who said he was arrested for taking photographs, according to people familiar with the matter. Most of those Premise users arrested or detained drew the attention of security guards or police when conspicuously taking smartphone photographs, the people said, adding that some users also faced occasional threats of violence while photographing sites such as markets, banks, mosques, police stations and gas stations.

The company said one contributor in Rwanda was detained for two weeks. It said it couldn’t confirm some of the arrests the Journal has identified and wasn’t aware of any contributors being convicted of a crime. The company built safety systems into its app, including screens that tell users to leave the area if requested. It experimented with giving contributors credentials or letters to try to explain Premise’s work and prepared a response plan in case a contributor was killed, the people said. No Premise contributor has ever been injured on the job, the company said. Certain proposed projects involving photographing ports or sites suspected of being affiliated with terrorist groups have been turned down over safety concerns, the people said.

Premise said the number of contributors arrested represents just 0.0007% of its total contributor base. The company also said in November it had engaged former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and his company, The Chertoff Group, [to study how to improve contributor safety](#).

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Ukraine digital army: attacks, intel, infowar
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/technology/ukraine-digital-army-breeds-cyberattacks-intel-and-infowar/

BOSTON (AP) — Formed in a fury to counter Russia's blitzkrieg attack, Ukraine's hundreds-strong volunteer "hacker" corps is much more than a paramilitary cyberattack force in Europe's first major war of the internet age. It is crucial to information combat and to crowdsourcing intelligence .

"We are really a swarm. A self-organizing swarm," said Roman Zakharov, a 37-year-old IT executive at the center of Ukraine's bootstrap digital army.

Inventions of the volunteer hackers range from software tools that let smartphone and computer owners anywhere participate in distributed denial-of-service attacks on official Russian websites to bots on the Telegram messaging platform that block disinformation, let people report Russian troop locations and offer instructions on assembling Molotov cocktails and basic first aid.

Zakharov ran research at an automation startup before joining Ukraine's digital self-defense corps. His group is StandForUkraine. Its ranks include software engineers, marketing managers, graphic designers and online ad buyers, he said.

The movement is global, drawing on IT professionals in the Ukrainian diaspora whose handiwork includes web defacements with antiwar messaging and graphic images of death and destruction in the hopes of mobilizing Russians against the invasion.

"Both our nations are scared of a single man — (Russian President Vladimir) Putin," said Zakharov. "He's just out of his mind." Volunteers reach out person-to-person to Russians with phone calls, emails and text messages, he said, and send videos and pictures of dead soldiers from the invading force from virtual call centers.

Some build websites, such as a "site where Russian mothers can look through (photos of) captured Russian guys to find their sons," Zakharov said by phone from Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital.

The cyber volunteers' effectiveness is difficult to gauge. Russian government websites have been repeatedly knocked offline, if briefly, by the DDoS attacks, but generally weather them with countermeasures.

It's impossible to say how much of the disruption — including more damaging hacks — is caused by freelancers working independently of but in solidarity with Ukrainian hackers.

A tool called "Liberator" lets anyone in the world with a digital device become part of a DDoS attack network, or botnet. The tool's programmers code in new targets as priorities change.

But is it legal? Some analysts say it violates international cyber norms. Its Estonian developers say they acted "in coordination with the Ministry of Digital Transformation" of Ukraine.

A top Ukrainian cybersecurity official, Victor Zhora, insisted at his first online news conference of the war Friday that homegrown volunteers were attacking only what they deem military targets, in which he included the financial sector, Kremlin-controlled media and railways. He did not discuss specific targets.

Zakharov did. He said Russia's banking sector was well fortified against attack but that some telecommunications networks and rail services were not. He said Ukrainian-organized cyberattacks had briefly interrupted rail ticket sales in western Russia around Rostov and Voronezh and knocked out telephone service for a time in the region of eastern Ukraine controlled by Russian-backed separatists since 2014. The claims could not be independently confirmed.

A group of Belarusian hacktivists calling themselves the Cyber Partisans also apparently disrupted rail service in neighboring Belarus this week seeking to frustrate transiting Russian troops. A spokeswoman said Friday that electronic ticket sales were still down after their malware attack froze up railway IT servers.

Over the weekend, Ukraine's minister of digital transformation, Mykhailo Fedorov, announced the creation of an volunteer cyber army. The IT Army of Ukraine now counts 290,000 followers on Telegram.

Zhora, deputy chair of the state special communications service, said one job of Ukrainian volunteers is to obtain intelligence that can be used to attack Russian military systems.

Some cybersecurity experts have expressed concern that soliciting help from freelancers who violate cyber norms could have dangerous escalatory consequences. One shadowy group claimed to have hacked Russian satellites; Dmitry Rogozin, the director general of Russia's space agency Roscosmos, called the claim false but was also quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying such a cyberattack would be considered an act of war.

Asked if he endorsed the kind of hostile hacking being done under the umbrella of the Anonymous hacktivist brand — which anyone can claim — Zhora said, "We do not welcome any illegal activity in cyberspace."

"But the world order changed on the 24th of February," he added, when Russia invaded.

The overall effort was spurred by the creation of a group called the Ukrainian Cyber Volunteers by a civilian cybersecurity executive, Yegor Aushev, in coordination with Ukraine's Defense Ministry. Aushev said it numbers more than 1,000 volunteers.

On Friday, most of Ukraine's telecommunications and internet were fully operational despite outages in areas captured by invading Russian forces, said Zhora. He reported about 10 hostile hijackings of local government websites in Ukraine to spread false propaganda saying Ukraine's government had capitulated.

Zhora said presumed Russian hackers continued trying to spread destructive malware in targeted email attacks on Ukrainian officials and — in what he considers a new tactic — to infect the devices of individual citizens. Three instances of such malware were discovered in the runup to the invasion.

U.S. Cyber Command has been assisting Ukraine since well before the invasion. Ukraine does not have a dedicated military cyber unit. It was standing one up when Russia attacked.

Zhora anticipates an escalation in Russia's cyber aggression — many experts believe far worse is yet to come.

Meantime, donations from the global IT community continue to pour in. A few examples: NameCheap has donated internet domains while Amazon has been generous with cloud services, said Zakharov.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Teen's website assists Ukraine refugees
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/ukraine/mercerc-island-teen-ukrainian-refugee-website/281-cb021fac-ba0d-4e08-9b37-2cee9a6382a8
GIST	<p>MERCER ISLAND, Wash. — Two years after he built a website tracking COVID-19 data across the globe, Avi Schiffmann is putting his skills to use on another issue: The war in Ukraine.</p> <p>During his gap year from Harvard, Schiffmann is working on start-up projects, but he also found the time to build a website, UkraineTakeShelter, where hosts can offer their homes to Ukrainian refugees in need.</p> <p>Right now there are a few hundred listings on the website in places like Germany, Poland, Iceland and even in the United States. Schiffmann said he's working with a team who is in contact with Ukrainians still living in the country who are helping to make sure the website is as easy to use as possible.</p> <p>"One of the reasons I made the website in the first place is I felt if you are a stressed refugee literally running away from explosions and gunfire, are you going to go to some government website that's filled</p>

with paragraphs and jargon? No, that's ridiculous. Instead, you can go to my website and just immediately enter your closest city or your current city and you immediately see listings, you can contact these people," Schiffmann said.

"The whole point of the website is for it to just be like a public bulletin to aid in the discoverability of connecting refugees to hosts," he said.

When refugees are searching for a place to stay, they can use filters to select hosts who will allow pets, are kid-friendly, offer legal or elderly assistance, disability support and childcare support among several other options. Those looking for a place to stay can also search by language spoken in the household.

"It's really direct practical tools that are able to help people," Schiffmann said. "It's never been easier to go online, go on YouTube and just search like, 'How do I code websites?' and then get in any language you want, hundreds and hundreds of videos that just show you how to do every possible thing you could imagine."

Schiffmann said he's now trying to speak with media in Europe to spread awareness in countries refugees may be fleeing to. He said he'd also like to work with aid organizations and anyone with friends of family in foreign countries who can help him get the word out.

"There are already more than a million refugees that have left the country. It's really impractical and unrealistic to expect [aid organizations] to be able to efficiently match refugee to host when there are so many of them," he said. "So what I like about this website is it really puts the power back into the hands of the refugee where they're able to take the initiative and just immediately go into the search bar and put in their city and these listings will come up."

Schiffmann encourages people living in Seattle and elsewhere in the US to post listings as well, even though refugees are primarily headed to other European countries at the moment.

"It's worth it to just post your listing and maybe one day a refugee will end up here, there's 40 million-plus people in Ukraine. As the war escalates people need to go somewhere," he said. "I think it's worth it to still post a listing and hope that eventually someone maybe will find it."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 TikTok gripped by violence, misinformation
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/technology/tiktok-ukraine-misinformation.html
GIST	<p>Bre Hernandez used to scan TikTok for videos of makeup tutorials and taco truck reviews. Since Russia invaded Ukraine, the 19-year-old has spent hours each day scrolling the app for war videos, watching graphic footage of Ukrainian tanks firing on Russian troops and civilians running away from enemy gunfire.</p> <p>"What I see on TikTok is more real, more authentic than other social media," said Ms. Hernandez, a student in Los Angeles. "I feel like I see what people there are seeing."</p> <p>But what Ms. Hernandez was actually viewing and hearing in the TikTok videos was footage of Ukrainian tanks taken from video games, as well as a soundtrack that was first uploaded to the app more than a year ago. The footage and soundtrack were traced back to their original sources in a New York Times analysis of the videos.</p> <p>TikTok, the Chinese-owned video app known for viral dance and lip-syncing videos, has emerged as one of the most popular platforms for sharing videos and photos of the Russia-Ukraine war. Over the past week, hundreds of thousands of videos about the conflict have been uploaded to the app from across the world, according to a review by The Times. The New Yorker has called the invasion the world's "first TikTok war."</p> <p>The surge has put TikTok in a challenging position. For the first time, it is dealing with moderating a flood of videos — many of them unverified — about a single event that has captivated a global audience. That is</p>

leading it to essentially confront a large scale of misleading and distorted information that has long bedeviled more mature social networks and video sites, such as YouTube, [Facebook](#) and Instagram.

Many popular TikTok videos of the invasion — including of Ukrainians livestreaming from their bunkers — offer real accounts of the action, according to researchers who study the platform. But other videos [have been impossible to authenticate and substantiate](#). Some simply appear to be exploiting the interest in the invasion for views, the researchers said.

In one example, Pravda, a Ukrainian newspaper, posted an audio clip featuring 13 Ukrainian soldiers on Snake Island, an outpost of the Black Sea, facing a Russian military unit that asked them to surrender. The clip was then used in many TikTok videos, some of which included a note stating that all 13 soldiers had died. Ukrainian officials later said in a [Facebook post](#) that the men were alive and had been taken prisoner, but the TikTok videos have not been corrected.

“There are people who are, right now, seeing war for the first time on TikTok,” said Abbie Richards, an independent researcher who studies the app. “People trust it. The result is that a lot of people are seeing false information about Ukraine and believing it.”

TikTok and other social media platforms are also under pressure from U.S. lawmakers and Ukrainian officials to curb Russian misinformation about the war, especially from state-backed media outlets such as Russia Today and Sputnik. In response, YouTube has said it would block Russia Today and Sputnik in the European Union, while Twitter and Meta, the parent of Facebook, have said they would label content from the outlets as state sponsored.

TikTok has also banned Sputnik and Russia Today in the E.U., but has not labeled the outlets as state-sponsored in the countries where they are still available. The app said on Thursday that it had dedicated more resources to monitoring for misleading content about the war.

“We continue to respond to the war in Ukraine with increased safety and security resources to detect emerging threats and remove harmful misinformation,” said Hilary McQuaide, a TikTok spokeswoman.

For years, TikTok largely escaped sustained scrutiny about its content. Unlike Facebook, which has been around since 2004, and YouTube, which was founded in 2005, TikTok only became widely used in the past five years. Owned by [China's ByteDance](#), the app was designed to make one- to three-minute videos easy to create and share. It developed a reputation as a destination for addictive, silly and fun videos, especially for young users.

The app has navigated some controversies in the past. It has faced questions over [harmful fads](#) that appeared to originate on its platform, as well as [whether it allows underage users](#) and [adequately protects their privacy](#).

But the war in Ukraine has supersized the issues facing TikTok, which has over one billion users globally.

The volume of war content on the app far outweighs what is found on some other social networks, according to a review by The Times. Videos with the hashtag #Ukrainewar have amassed nearly 500 million views on TikTok, with some of the most popular videos gaining close to one million likes. In contrast, the #Ukrainewar hashtag on Instagram had 125,000 posts and the most popular videos were viewed tens of thousands of times.

The very features that TikTok designed to help people share and record their own content have also made it easy to spread unverified videos across its platform. That includes TikTok's algorithm for its “For You” page, which suggests videos based on what people have previously seen, liked or shared. Viewing one video with misinformation likely leads to more videos with misinformation being shown, Ms. Richards said.

Another popular TikTok feature lets people easily reuse audio, which has enabled people to create lip-syncing scenes of popular movies or songs. But audio can be misused and taken out of context, Ms. Richards said.

Over the last week, audio from a 2020 explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, was uploaded to several TikTok videos that claimed to show present-day Ukraine, according to The Times's review. In another instance, a soundtrack of gunfire that was uploaded to TikTok on Feb. 1 — before Russia's invasion — was later used in over 1,700 videos, many of which purported to be from the fighting in Ukraine, Ms. Richards said.

Removing such content is not easy, partly because of TikTok's global nature. Once a video is uploaded, it is often recorded over and translated into dozens of languages. If the videos are not reported by users, they need to be independently found by content moderators proficient in those languages before they can be taken down.

"Video is the hardest format to moderate for all platforms," said Alex Stamos, the director of the Stanford Internet Observatory and a former head of security at Facebook. "When combined with the fact that TikTok's algorithm is the primary factor for what content a user sees, as opposed to friendships or follows on the big U.S. platforms, this makes TikTok a uniquely potent platform for viral propaganda."

Dafne Atacan, 23, a Turkish national in the San Francisco Bay Area, said she was aware that she needed to fact check TikTok videos of the war. She said she had noticed that many of the videos appeared to be edited from news reports or were commentary from people in the United States who were watching Ukraine's events from afar.

"I feel like lately, the videos I'm seeing are designed to get me riled up, or to emotionally manipulate me," she said. "I get worried so now, sometimes, I find myself Googling something or checking the comments to see if it is real before I trust it."

Ms. Hernandez, the student in Los Angeles, said she was surprised to learn from a Times reporter that some TikTok videos she had viewed about the war were misleading and unreliable.

"I guess I don't really know what war looks like," she said. "But we go to TikTok to learn about everything, so it makes sense we would trust it about this too."

Ms. Hernandez added that TikTok remained her preferred platform for news. Most of what she sees on the app, she said, was real.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Crypto frauds target Ukrainian donations
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/crypto-frauds-target-ukrainian-donations-11646408697?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>Cryptocurrency frauds are trying to take advantage of an outpouring of support for Ukraine.</p> <p>A number of schemes launched in the wake of Russia's invasion have tried to trick donors into sending crypto to fraudsters, research firm Elliptic said. The largest is a scam cryptocurrency whose value has risen to about \$50 million, the firm said, even after it was exposed as a fake.</p> <p>Legitimate aid groups have been raising funds via cryptocurrencies for Ukraine relief efforts. They were soon joined by the Ukrainian government itself, which has so far received about \$56 million in cryptocurrency donations. Much of the effort has been coordinated through Ukraine's largest exchange, Kuna.</p> <p>But scams, frauds and Ponzi schemes have been a persistent problem in the crypto markets since the beginning, and are especially virulent during chaotic times. The research firm Chainalysis estimates frauds took in a record \$14 billion in 2021.</p>

	<p>Crypto and social media are a dangerous combination. Crypto donations are fast, and once confirmed irreversible. And it is easy to create a mock-up of a real donation's social-media post, change the details for where to send the money, and take advantage of people who aren't looking closely enough.</p> <p>That appears to be what happened in at least one case. A group purporting to represent the Ukrainian government set up a cryptocurrency called Peaceful World and began soliciting donations. They began selling it on the Uniswap platform. Even after it was exposed as a scam, its value kept rising, Elliptic said.</p> <p>As of Thursday evening, its market value was \$50.8 million, according to Elliptic co-founder Tom Robinson.</p> <p>On Thursday, New York Attorney General Letitia James warned about scams taking advantage of people trying to support Ukraine. "Scammers often take advantage of crises to exploit our generosity and compassion," she said.</p> <p>She said donors should take the time to research the groups asking for money, and singled out giving through social media as a risk. "Don't assume that charities recommended on social-media sites, blogs, or other websites have already been vetted."</p>
Return to Top	

Terror Conditions

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Syria militants attack military bus; kill 13
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/syria-militants-attack-military-bus-killing-13-troops-83283315
GIST	<p>BEIRUT -- Militants attacked a military bus traveling on a desert highway in central Syria on Sunday, killing 13 troops including several officers, state media reported.</p> <p>State news agency SANA said the militants used a variety of weapons in attack in the Palmyra region, adding that 18 soldiers were wounded.</p> <p>No further details were immediately available and no one claimed responsibility. In the past, Syrian authorities have blamed such attacks on Islamic State group militants who have been active in southern and central Syria, despite losing territorial control in the country since 2019.</p> <p>In January, IS militants fired rockets and an anti-aircraft gun at a bus traveling in the same area, killing five troops.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/06 Tunisia: kidnapping terror plot foiled
SOURCE	https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/tunisia/2022/03/06/tunisia-says-terror-plot-to-kidnap-children-of-policemen-and-soldiers-foiled/
GIST	<p>Tunisian authorities have arrested a woman suspected of planning to abduct the children of police officers and soldiers and carry out terrorist attacks, the Interior Ministry announced.</p> <p>Authorities said the women supported extremist religious ideas and as well as the kidnappings and was planning to attack military and security personnel using improvised explosive devices.</p> <p>"The woman aimed to kidnap children of a number of policemen and soldiers to bargain for the release of [extremist] prisoners implicated in terrorist operations," the ministry said on its official Facebook page.</p> <p>It said she planned to carry out a suicide bombing using an explosive belt inside a security facility.</p> <p>The woman had previously been jailed for terrorism-related convictions, the ministry said.</p>

It did not name the woman or say when she was arrested.

“The operation was carried out jointly by the Anti-Terrorism Department of the National Guard and the Department of Prevention and Combating Terrorism of the Intelligence and Security Agency for National Defence and under the supervision of the Public Prosecution Office,” it said.

Saturday’s announcement comes as the North African country suffers a worsening political crisis after President Kais Saied seized executive power last year.

The case has raised questions about women's active and willing participation in violent extremism.

There is little data on the number of female extremist recruits across the region, but anti-terror experts say the role of women has evolved from assisting men and indoctrinating children to carrying out suicide bombings.

In April 2021, a woman detonated an explosive belt, killing herself and a baby, during a security operation against extremist groups in Kasserine province.

In October 2018, a woman blew herself up in the centre of Tunis, wounding 15 people, including 10 police officers. The attack shattered a period of calm that had held since dozens were killed in ISIS attacks on key tourist locations in the country in 2015.

Sousse was the scene of one of Tunisia's worst attacks in 2015, when 38 people, most of them British tourists, were killed by a gunman.

Several thousand Tunisians travelled overseas to join and fight for extremist groups in Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere between 2011 and 2016, International Crisis Group said in a report.

Since the international coalition destroyed ISIS in Iraq and Syria and Al Qaeda capabilities have degraded, the number of extremist attacks has dropped considerably in Tunisia, which has adopted strict counter-terror measures during the past nine years.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Court sides w/FBI in surveillance dispute
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/supreme-court-rules-fbi-muslim-community-surveillance-california/
GIST	<p><i>Washington</i> — The Supreme Court on Friday sided with the FBI in a dispute over its efforts to stop from going forward a lawsuit brought by three Muslim men who argue the federal government targeted them and their Southern California community for surveillance based on their religion.</p> <p>The court issued a unanimous decision addressing what it said was the narrow question of whether a provision of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) displaces the state-secrets privilege, which was asserted by the federal government in its request that the men's claims be dismissed. The FBI argued disclosure of the information sought by the three men would harm national-security interests.</p> <p>Writing for the unanimous court, Justice Samuel Alito said the justices did not decide whether a federal district court was correct to dismiss most of the claims from the three men and send the case back to the lower court for further proceedings.</p> <p>"[W]e decide whether the government's evidence is privileged or whether the district court was correct to dismiss respondents' claims on the pleadings," he wrote.</p> <p>Alito noted that the text of FISA "weighs heavily" against the argument raised by the men that FISA displaces the state-secrets privilege.</p>

"FISA makes no reference to the state secrets privilege," he wrote. "It neither mentions the privilege by name nor uses any identifiable synonym, and its only reference to the subject of privilege reflects a desire to avoid the alteration of privilege law."

The legal battle before the justices arose after the FBI used a confidential informant named Craig Monteilh to gather information about Muslim residents in Orange County from 2006 to 2007. Over a 14-month span, Monteilh allegedly surveilled the Muslim Americans through non-electronic and electronic means, including by gathering personal information through face-to-face meetings and through video and audio recordings from inside mosques, homes, businesses and at events, according to court filings.

The FBI's operation, known as Operation Flex, fell apart when Monteilh began expressing interest in violence and said he had access to weapons and wanted to take violent action, according to filings with the Supreme Court. Members of the Muslim community reported him to law enforcement, after which he was revealed to be an FBI informant.

Three of the men who met with and were surveilled by Monteilh — Sheikh Yassir Fazaga, Ali Uddin Malik and Yasser AbdelRahim — sued the FBI in federal court, alleging they were targeted for surveillance because of their religion.

But the federal government moved to dismiss the suit, arguing the claims couldn't be litigated without risking the disclosure of state secrets — namely, who was being investigated and why — and invoked the state-secrets privilege.

The district court upheld the government's assertion of the state-secrets privilege, finding its disclosure would compromise national security. But the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed, ruling that the procedures established under FISA regarding the legality of challenged electronic surveillance displace the state-secrets privilege and the district court should have reviewed the materials first to see whether the surveillance was unlawful.

With its decision, the Supreme Court reversed the 9th Circuit's decision that allowed the suit to move forward.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 ISIS: Ukraine 'amusing punishment'; chaos
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/isis-picks-favored-victor-in-russian-invasion-chaos/
GIST	<p>Calling Russia's war on Ukraine "an amusing punishment," ISIS weighed in on the escalating invasion by warning Muslims against siding with a "crusader" and predicting protracted, destabilizing conflict that will weaken their foes.</p> <p>In a full-page article in its weekly al-Naba newsletter, the terror group predicted that "whatever the result" of the invasion "there is no doubt that there are major consequences of this war."</p> <p>The Russian attack on Ukraine was "not surprising," ISIS continued, calling it part of "the state of the escalating competition between America and Russia to control the countries of Eastern Europe, especially after the policy of 'support and containment' that America pursued" was seen as a "major threat" by Russia.</p> <p>"It's an amusing punishment ... upon them for their disbelief in God Almighty," the article branded the war, adding that "the disbelievers struggle over the world and its wreckage."</p> <p>The terror group addressed the issue of taking a side in the war, saying that Muslims shouldn't favor one over the other — or fight for one over the other — even as some "are waiting for clarity ... to decide his position on taking sides for one of the two Crusaders!"</p>

ISIS called it “unsurprising” that Putin brought “Chechen apostate militias” into combat with the support of Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov, “an apostate fighting on Putin’s platform.” The terror group compared Kadyrov to former Afghan President Hamid Karzai “fighting on Bush’s platform.”

“The ‘Crusader vs. Crusader’ is still in its infancy, so, O God, perpetuate their wars and break their hearts,” the article declared.

Social media discussions among Islamic extremists have ranged from hatred for Russia because of President Vladimir Putin’s alliance with Syria’s Bashar al-Assad and their brutal military campaign against Syrians, to not wanting to back Ukraine because President Volodymyr Zelensky is Jewish, Ukrainians served as one of the largest Coalition forces contingents in the Iraq war, and the country is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

Terror groups ultimately root on the side of chaos and mutual destruction. Extremist groups have been known to insert their opinions or directives into domestic or international conflicts — and even clashes at a much smaller local level such as high-profile protests or battles with police — in the name of stoking that chaos and attempting to internally weaken their enemies.

After the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, al-Qaeda went so far as to declare that it was fortuitous that the fourth plane on 9/11 didn’t reach its Washington target, stating that an “impending civil war” can better destroy the country as they simultaneously urged Protestants to assassinate President Biden for being a “provocative” Catholic in the Oval Office.

“The drumbeats of an impending civil war can clearly be heard,” the video said. “It was a civil war that brought the mother of all evils into existence, and it shall be a civil war that marks its ultimate doom.”

Al-Qaeda then tried to stoke violence within Christianity, stating that “it is worth pointing out here that Biden is only the second Catholic president to make it to the White House” and “he insists in almost a provocative manner on putting the Pope’s picture on display on his office desk.” A picture of President Biden greeting Pope Francis was showed among the framed photos along the window behind the Resolute desk.

“Will Trump’s Protestant followers be amused by such a scene? Or will Biden meet the fate of his Catholic Democratic predecessor John Kennedy?” the terror group’s incitement continued. “This ladies and gentlemen is America ... on the verge of collapse. In only one month we pass from America’s first... to America’s last.”

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/07 Taliban crackdown activists, foreigners
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/03/07/afghanistan-canada-nadima-noor-taliban/
GIST	<p>KABUL — A dozen men identifying themselves as members of the Taliban stormed Nadima Noor’s office in mid-February, informed her she was under arrest and ordered her into a car parked in the street outside. She initially refused, but when the men threatened to begin executing her colleagues, she had to comply.</p> <p>That was nearly a month ago, according to her brother Dastan Noor, who has been able to piece together that day’s events by speaking to some of her colleagues who were released. Noor, a 38-year-old dual Canadian-Afghan national, remains in prison. She ran a small humanitarian organization with a Western colleague who was also arrested that day.</p> <p>It is unclear whether she has been charged with a crime. Her family has not been informed of any formal charges, and the Taliban refuses to comment publicly on the matter. Just over six months after the Taliban’s military takeover of Afghanistan, there is a widening crackdown on Afghans and foreigners alike across the country. Targeted arrests are on the rise, and once detained, many are held for months. Two journalists working for the United Nations are the only foreigners so far released.</p>

A senior Taliban intelligence official said he did not know what Noor is charged with, but most Westerners are arrested on suspicion of espionage, human trafficking or lack of proper documentation.

The human trafficking charge is often used against those accused of helping Afghans flee the country, the official added, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter with the media.

Taliban officials initially said Noor would be released within days but have since told her family their investigation has expanded, without any further explanation.

The first female dual national arrested by the Taliban since the group took control of Afghanistan last year, Noor and her colleague bring the total number of Westerners in Taliban custody to eight, according to the intelligence officer. The majority of the Westerners imprisoned are British citizens, but an American is also among those held.

“These arrests are a lesson to all the foreigners in Afghanistan who are not obeying the rules,” said the officer, who has direct knowledge of Nadima Noor’s arrest. He said she may not be formally charged but said the group’s full investigation would reveal any wrongdoing once complete.

“We have a government now, and just like in any country, the foreigners here must follow the laws,” the officer said.

Noor was arrested by a Taliban intelligence unit that technically falls under the country’s Interior Ministry but appears to operate with near total autonomy. Like the other foreigners, she is being held at the ministry, her brother said, but the chain of command is unclear.

“I’m confused about who is even making the decisions there,” he said.

Going public with his sister’s ordeal is his family’s last resort, he said, after weeks of speaking directly to the minister and other senior figures and not making any progress.

A Kabul-based diplomat with direct knowledge of ongoing negotiations said the lack of formal communication between different arms of the Taliban often makes it difficult to gather information when anyone is arrested. Most arrests occur without formal charges, and some people have been held for days before the relevant diplomatic missions or even the Taliban’s own Ministry of Foreign Affairs was notified, he said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter with the media.

The Taliban has not publicly requested an exchange for the detained foreigners, but two of the countries involved conducted separate diplomatic visits to Kabul in an effort to secure their release, a second Taliban intelligence official said. Both visits were unsuccessful.

Afghan journalists, activists, professors and political analysts have come under increased pressure in recent months. Some 20 female Afghan activists remain in prison despite repeated international pressure for their release.

One of the few vocal critics of the Taliban remaining in Afghanistan, Sayed Baqir Mohsini, a university professor, went missing for two days over the weekend after accusing the Taliban of censorship on Facebook.

Mohsini became a frequent guest on political talk shows after the group’s takeover. But then last week, Taliban intelligence threatened Shams Amani, the host of a show, with arrest if he continued to broadcast Mohsini’s appearances.

“The Taliban want us to censor us,” Amani said. “After that, we only have two choices: stop appearing on television or start speaking in support of the Taliban.”

Mohsini posted on Facebook late Sunday that he was safely back with his family, but the once outspoken professor didn't immediately respond to requests for an interview.

Despite an initial demonstration of limited tolerance, many Afghans and the international community fear the recent crackdowns signal that the group intends to rule the relatively liberal, urban areas with the same harsh tactics it employed over the past two decades to control large swaths of rural Afghanistan.

"It's natural that if you go somewhere new, you need time to get to know the people," Shakir Nasir, a senior Taliban police commander, said of the group's takeover of Kabul and other Afghan cities.

"But over time, we have recognized who is good and who is bad," he said, referring to the increase in arrests in recent months and the launch of massive house-to-house search operations that have sparked pockets of anger and resentment.

"We made lots of promises to our people and worked to increase trust," he said. "But some people took advantage of our good behavior."

Taliban forces say they are also able to monitor more of the Afghan population now.

A female activist who once regularly took to the streets in Kabul to protest for her rights is now in hiding after Taliban fighters came looking for her at her home and beat her father. "The restrictions are just increasing day by day now," she said, speaking on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

Foreigners in the country are also under increased monitoring by a recently established department within the Taliban's intelligence unit, according to the second intelligence officer.

"We follow all journalists on social media, we watch where they move, and of 100 people who say they are journalists, believe me, only three or four are real journalists," he said.

Noor had a vocal social media presence, posting a combination of humorous and inspirational videos promoting her humanitarian work, calling for harmony, love and positive energy to end conflict and improve the quality of life for Afghans.

"She gained a lot of followers through her social media presence," said Dastaan Noor, her brother. The exposure helped her promote her organization, but he said it also sparked nasty smear campaigns and could have contributed to other problems, especially with Afghanistan's more conservative communities.

When the Taliban took Kabul, "Nadima refused to change the way she worked," he said. When many Kabul residents were too fearful to leave their homes, she continued to post to social media and began giving interviews to journalists, refusing to demonize either side.

"She felt really safe, but she liked to push limits. She's a rebel," her brother said. As the situation in Kabul became less and less predictable, he often advised her to lower her profile.

"I remember I shared a quote with her. ... You sometimes need to be a lion and sometimes you need to be a fox. Now is the time to be a fox."

"And I remember exactly what she said: 'I'm neither, I'm a wolf!' "

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Afghans need cash stuck in bank accounts
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-cash-some-afghans-desperately-need-is-trapped-in-their-bank-accounts-11646578800?mod=hp_listb_pos2

KABUL—Pacha Khan arrived at the bank at 5:30 a.m., but it was already too late. Others had been in line for hours. It was the fifth day in a row he tried and failed to withdraw \$200, his bank's weekly limit.

"It will take me one and a half months to withdraw all the money I need," said Mr. Khan, as he tried to get enough cash to pay for surgery for his 3-month-old nephew.

In Afghanistan, where the [economy has been imploding](#) since the [Taliban takeover in August](#), paying for basics such as rent, travel or medical treatment has become an ordeal that can take months. That is the case even for the few who have enough savings.

With the [central bank effectively paralyzed](#) and shipments of the national currency suspended, banks are short of cash. Withdrawals nationwide are capped at \$400 a week. At some banks, limits are lower.

While most Afghans don't have a bank account, [the cash crisis](#) has had widespread, sometimes [life-altering, ripple effects](#).

For years, Mr. Khan's extended family put their savings in a single bank account under his name. That money is now trapped. Until the family can get hold of \$1,400 in cash, his nephew's next round of intestinal surgeries has to wait. The baby is at home, a tube inserted in his abdomen.

"The only thing I can think about is my nephew. I want him to get well. We'll worry later about how we'll be able to pay for basic expenses like food," said Mr. Khan, 28 years old, who recently lost his job at a brick factory.

Trying to get small sums of cash from the bank has become a tedious routine. While some banks have functioning ATMs, withdrawing cash at others can take three days or more. It begins as customers arrive shortly after midnight to register their names—if they aren't too far back in line to sign up. On day two, they hand over their bank cards. On day three, they get their money.

Not everyone has that kind of time.

"I work as a teacher, but three days a week I can't go to school because I come here," said Hasibullah Hoshmand, 28, in a line outside a branch of Azizi Bank, one of Afghanistan's biggest private banks. "If I keep coming here, they will fire me because I can't work."

He has no choice, Mr. Hoshmand said. Shortly before [the Taliban takeover](#) he borrowed \$20,000 for his deaf daughter to get ear surgery in Turkey. Before he could proceed, Kabul fell. It could take two years or more to withdraw the loan money, under current rules. "I have a serious problem with the people whose money I borrowed," said Mr. Hoshmand, who was recently robbed in the middle of the night. "And I can't treat my daughter."

Many [misfortunes have afflicted Afghans](#) since the economy went into free fall when the Taliban [toppled the Western-backed republic](#). Foreign aid that funded 75% of public spending [vanished overnight](#). Development projects were put on hold. Hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs. The central bank's foreign assets, needed to prop up the local currency, were frozen.

Sanctions [have halted most international transactions](#). The prices of basic goods have been rising. Some 22.8 million people—around half of the Afghan population—[are struggling to feed themselves](#), according to the United Nations World Food Program.

With the banking sector on the brink of collapse, the central bank introduced withdrawal limits and other restrictions on capital outflows in September. The Afghan central bank has appealed to the U.S. government to release the \$7 billion in foreign assets held on U.S. soil to address the liquidity crisis.

The U.S. says it is considering using some of those funds to help alleviate the cash crunch. About [\\$3.5 billion of those assets](#) has been set aside pending litigation by relatives of 9/11 victims.

The central bank said its restrictions on cash withdrawals are temporary. The issue “will be resolved as the United States releases the blocked assets of Afghanistan,” said bank spokesman Mohammad Sabir Momand.

For Farima, a 45-year-old widow who goes by one name, at stake is whether—and what—she can feed her children. On a recent day, Farima waited for hours outside her bank to withdraw \$40, her monthly salary for her work as a part-time cleaner at Afghanistan’s Supreme Court. With that money, and some help from relatives, she has to provide for her six children.

“I’ve been coming to the bank for three days. They always tell me: ‘Come the next day.’ I wonder what my children will eat?” she said.

The currency crisis has given rise to illicit services to get around the cash-withdrawal limit.

When Aminullah Amin’s son was recently offered a place at a Swiss university, Mr. Amin didn’t know how to pay for it, since his money was stuck in the bank.

An acquaintance, a money trader by profession, offered him a solution. “Give me 30% of your money, and I will give you the rest in cash all at once. It will take two days,” Mr. Amin recalled the person as saying.

Such activity is banned by the central bank, which restricted domestic wire transfers to cut down on the practice. Advertisements for such services continue to appear on social media.

Mr. Amin, a former manager at a local telecom company, turned down the offer. “I worked for 20 years. All the money I collected, I put it here. How could I give 30% of my money to these people?” he said. He plans to borrow from family and friends outside Afghanistan to pay for his son’s studies.

The near-paralysis of the financial sector is also getting in the way of [humanitarian aid](#). Although humanitarian organizations are exempt from sanctions, risk-averse [foreign banks are reluctant](#) to transfer money into Afghanistan.

A recent survey by the Norwegian Refugee Council found that the withdrawal limits and the difficulty in transferring money into the country is hampering the work of around 85% of nongovernment organizations active in Afghanistan.

Afghanaid, a U.K.-based NGO, delivers fuel, blankets and cash to poor families in remote Afghan provinces. That costs \$500,000 or more a week in local expenses. Under current bank rules, the NGO wouldn’t be able to withdraw more than \$25,000 a month.

To get around the financial obstacles, Afghanaid—like many other NGOs and private businesses—has turned to the hawala system, a centuries-old network of money traders that, based on an honor system, delivers cash within and between countries.

It hasn’t gone smoothly. In December, Western banks held up transfers the NGO sent to hawala dealers in the U.K. and in Australia, stalling the delivery of funds for three weeks.

As a result, Afghanaid couldn’t spend anything in December, meaning some 100,000 people weren’t able to receive cash or items they needed to keep warm that month, the NGO said.

But the hawala system “is not just easier. At the moment it’s the only viable system,” said Charles Davy, managing director of Afghanaid. “The international community has been very generous. The challenge for us has been moving money.”

[Return to Top](#)

SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/supreme-court-reinstates-death-sentence-for-boston-marathon-bomber-11646407964?cx_testId=3&cx_testVariant=cx_2&cx_artPos=0&mod=WTRN#cxrecs_s
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—The Supreme Court on Friday reinstated the death sentence for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, convicted in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing that killed three people and wounded hundreds more.</p> <p>An appeals court set aside Dzhokhar Tsarnaev’s sentence in 2020, finding that the trial judge erred in excluding mitigating evidence that suggested the defendant’s elder brother, Tamerlan, was more culpable for the attack and limiting the questions defense attorneys could ask prospective jurors about their exposure to news accounts of the crime.</p> <p>By a 6-3 vote, the Supreme Court found neither issue undermined the jury’s decision to recommend death.</p> <p>“Dzhokhar Tsarnaev committed heinous crimes,” Justice Clarence Thomas wrote for the court. “The Sixth Amendment nonetheless guaranteed him a fair trial before an impartial jury. He received one.” Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Amy Coney Barrett joined the majority.</p> <p>Justice Stephen Breyer dissented, joined in whole or part by Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan. He wrote that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev should have received leeway to introduce even tangential evidence suggesting that his older brother’s influence mitigated his culpability for the crime.</p> <p>It is unclear when, if ever, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev or other federal prisoners sentenced to death will be executed. President Biden campaigned on abolishing capital punishment, and Attorney General Merrick Garland has imposed a moratorium on federal executions while a review of death-penalty procedures is conducted.</p> <p>The U.S. attorney in Boston, Rachael Rollins, said that additional issues remain in the case. “Legal rulings don’t erase trauma and pain,” Ms. Rollins said. “Our focus today, and always, is on the hundreds of families that were deeply impacted and traumatized by this horrific act of domestic terrorism.”</p> <p>An attorney for Dzhokhar Tsarnaev couldn’t immediately be reached for comment.</p> <p>The Tsarnaev brothers, Chechen immigrants from Kyrgyzstan who consumed al Qaeda propaganda online, built bombs from pressure cookers, filled them with nails and other shrapnel, and placed them close to the marathon’s finish line near Boston’s Copley Square.</p> <p>The explosions injured and maimed hundreds; two women and an 8-year-old boy died.</p> <p>The brothers, who had left the scene, went on to commit a crime spree that included the murder of a Massachusetts Institute of Technology campus police officer. Authorities identified the suspects and launched a manhunt across the Boston region. Police found the brothers, leading to a violent confrontation that left Tamerlan Tsarnaev dead. Dzhokhar Tsarnaev fled and was captured the next day.</p> <p>Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, now 28, was convicted in 2015 of multiple crimes by a federal court in Boston. Upon the jury’s recommendation, Judge George O’Toole Jr. sentenced him to death.</p> <p>After finding flaws at trial, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, in Boston, ordered a new sentencing hearing. The Justice Department appealed to the Supreme Court.</p> <p>Justice Thomas’s opinion begins with four pages graphically recounting Dzhokhar Tsarnaev’s crimes, then goes on to conclude that the First Circuit overstepped by invalidating the death sentence.</p> <p>Judge O’Toole rejected a defense request to ask prospective jurors open-ended questions about what they learned about the case from the media. But he did take other steps to guard against prejudice from saturation coverage of the bombings, Justice Thomas wrote, such as summoning an expanded jury pool of</p>

nearly 1,400 people and asking them what media they followed and whether they had formed opinions about the case or posted online regarding what they read.

Justice Breyer’s dissent didn’t dispute the court’s view that Dzhokhar Tsarnaev suffered no prejudice from the pretrial publicity issue. But the conservative majority and liberal minority took sharply different positions on how wide a window the capital defendant should have to present mitigating evidence.

To buttress their claim that the older brother, Tamerlan, was the mastermind who led astray his younger brother, the defense sought to introduce evidence suggesting that the elder Tsarnaev committed previous killings as part of an escalating jihadist campaign—slitting three victims’ throats on Sept. 11, 2011, the 10th anniversary of al Qaeda’s suicide-hijackings.

Judge O’Toole refused to admit such evidence, finding that it “would be confusing to the jury and a waste of time,” partly because the key parties involved in that incident are dead.

Justice Thomas said that call was reasonable.

“Dzhokhar sought to divert the sentencing jury’s attention to a triple homicide that Tamerlan allegedly committed years prior, though there was no allegation that Dzhokhar had any role in that crime,” Justice Thomas wrote. Capital defendants are entitled to present information relevant to their case, he said, but their sentencing “proceedings are not evidentiary free-for-alls.”

Dzhokhar Tsarnaev’s argument for prison rather than death turned on portraying his older brother Tamerlan as a domineering violent extremist who radicalized his younger brother, then a student at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. Friday’s dissent observed that the jury took seriously such claims, in that it imposed death only for the counts where Dzhokhar Tsarnaev acted alone.

Justice Breyer said additional evidence of Tamerlan Tsarnaev’s behavior could have been probative.

“The Waltham evidence tended to show that Tamerlan was involved in a brutal triple murder...for ideological reasons,” Justice Breyer wrote. “Evidence that Tamerlan participated in (and potentially orchestrated) one set of ideologically motivated murders in 2011 supports the claim that Tamerlan was the violent, radicalizing force behind the ideologically motivated bombings a year and a half later.”

[Return to Top](#)

Suspicious, Unusual

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 DNR: heat dome killed 84,000 acres trees
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/84-thousand-acres-of-trees-damaged-during-heat-dome-washington/281-e5dd33bf-a529-4b28-ae6c-681d6b412c75
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. — About 84,000 acres of trees were damaged in the heat dome event of late June 2021, and most of those trees are in western Washington.</p> <p>The information is part of a new report from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The agency says that number could be an undercount.</p> <p>Called a needle desiccation event, it wasn’t just the hot temperatures, it was exposure to the sun. Temperatures hit 108 at Sea-Tac airport on June 28th. It was the third day in a row above 100 degrees.</p> <p>In the Cascade foothills, temperatures got even higher. Maple Valley hit 114. The city and the Covington area had one of the higher concentrations of damaged trees as mapped in aerial surveys taken by the DNR.</p>

	<p>DNR lists the highest concentrations of damaged trees on the “west side of the Olympic Peninsula, in the Cascade foothills areas of Snohomish, King and Lewis counties, western Pacific County, Wahkiakum County, and southern Clark and Skamania counties.”</p> <p>In its report, the data will be used as part of “ongoing research connecting the [heat dome] event to human-caused climate change.”</p> <p>Some young trees were killed. More mature trees are expected to recover as the worst damage was concentrated on one side of the tree.</p> <p>The species most impacted included Douglas-fir, western hemlock, western redcedar and Pacific silver fir.</p> <p>“Needles appeared brown or red, and in places branch tips and buds were also killed,” read the report. “The long-term impact of needle desiccation is not well studied, and it is assumed that larger well-established and otherwise healthy trees will be able to recover...”</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/05 World record how high volcano spewed ash
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2022/03/05/hunga-tonga-plume-mesosphere/
GIST	<p>NASA has confirmed that the Jan. 15 eruption of Hunga Tonga, an underwater volcano in the southwest Pacific, spewed ash 36 miles high into the atmosphere. That staggering figure sets a world record and indicates that volcanic material made it into the third layer of Earth’s atmosphere — the mesosphere.</p> <p>The agency called it “likely the highest plume in the satellite record,” surpassing what many volcanologists and atmospheric scientists had known was physically feasible. The findings open the door to new studies on the dynamics of volcanoes and the mechanisms of transport of the particles, or aerosols, they emit.</p> <p>The eruption of Hunga Tonga produced a tsunami that devastated parts of Tonga and even reached the U.S. Pacific coastline. Sound from the volcano’s explosive eruption was heard more than 5,000 miles away in Alaska, and air-pressure perturbations rapidly radiating outward from the volcano were picked up by weather stations around the globe.</p> <p>What are volcanic plumes?</p> <p>When a volcano erupts, it releases ash, smoke, steam, heat, gases and fine particulates into the atmosphere. The exceptional amount of heat within the plume causes it to rise. Air will ascend so long as it is warmer than its surroundings. As a plume entrains cooler air from the surrounding environment, its upward motion tends to slow.</p> <p>Ordinarily, thunderstorm and volcanic plumes alike tend to flatten out at the tropopause, or the “ceiling” of the lower atmosphere marking the threshold of the stratosphere. In the stratosphere, air temperature increases with height, making a warm layer that’s impenetrable to most updrafts. Only the hottest or most explosive and dense plumes are able to puncture the tropopause.</p> <p>Those plumes tend to be responsible for the injection of volcanic particles into the stratosphere. Sulfur dioxide and other aerosols that make it into the stratosphere can have bearings on Earth’s climate, as well as influence the color of sunrises and sunsets.</p> <p>Hunga Tonga’s plume</p> <p>Using data from the GOES-17 weather satellite and the Japanese satellite Himawari-8, which operate in “geosync” at 22,236 miles above Earth’s surface, scientists at NASA’s Langley Research Center were able to estimate the height of Hunga Tonga’s plume.</p> <p>Using multiple satellite sources viewing the plume from different angles, it was possible to ascertain the approximate height of the plume. That’s commonly referred to as a “parallax” effect.</p>

“From the two angles of the satellites, we were able to recreate a three-dimensional picture of the clouds,” said Konstantin Khlopenkov, a scientist on the NASA Langley team, in the NASA news release.

Ordinarily, calculating the height of the plume could have been achieved with only one satellite. As long as it was able to sense cloud top temperatures, meteorologists would have been able to make comparisons with data obtained from weather balloons and other estimates of the environment. It would have been a simple game of matching numbers — but Hunga Tonga’s plume soared higher than weather balloons.

How high did it get?

After careful inspection, it was determined that the plume soared 36 miles high — three times as tall as the most violent tornado-producing thunderstorms and 14 miles taller than the previous volcanic eruption world record. That was Mount Pinatubo, which erupted in the Philippines in 1991 to a height of 22 miles.

That placed the height of the plume solidly in the mesosphere, above the troposphere and stratosphere. Air temperature decreases with height in the troposphere and increases in the stratosphere; barreling through that comparatively warm stratospheric layer and penetrating the mesosphere is virtually unheard of.

The air in the mesosphere is extremely dry. Air temperature also decreases with altitude. The top of the mesosphere is the coldest part of Earth’s atmosphere; the air there is incredibly thin, and heat is also lost because of radiative emission from carbon dioxide. Meteors burn up in the mesosphere.

Characteristics of the plume

The plume had so much upward momentum in rising that it couldn’t “put the brakes on” when it came time to stop rising, resulting in a bubbling lump known as an overshooting top. The plume immediately subsided after its initial pulse of buoyancy, which created an undulating bobber-like motion that sent ripples known as “gravity waves” outward. Those ripples propagated through the ionosphere, a layer of Earth’s atmosphere rich in ions and free electrons which overlaps the mesosphere and thermosphere (the next layer up).

The plume sparked prolific lightning, producing 200,000 lightning strikes in just an hour’s time. It was the tallest thunderstorm ever directly observed on Earth. According to NASA, a staggering 60,000 square miles was covered by the resulting plume cloud, an area the size of Georgia.

The effects of the eruption are still being studied, but NASA reports material from the volcano had completed a full revolution around Earth in the Southern Hemisphere’s atmosphere within the first two weeks following the eruption. It does not appear that a sufficient quantity of sulfur dioxide was released to cool Earth’s climate.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 ESA: space junk digs new moon crater
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/space-junk-just-dug-big-new-crater-on-moon-astronomers-say-11646415842?mod=hp_lead_pos13
GIST	<p>If astronomers are right, the moon just got another crater.</p> <p>Just before 7:26 a.m. Eastern Time on Friday, a four-ton hunk of space junk careened into the lunar surface at nearly 5,800 miles an hour, analyses of the object’s trajectory indicated. The object, believed to be a spent Chinese rocket booster, was expected to create a 65-foot-wide crater on the moon’s far side.</p> <p>There is no way yet to confirm the impact because the lunar far side—which always faces away from Earth—can’t be seen with Earth-based telescopes.</p> <p>“We didn’t expect to be able to get any image of the actual impact,” said Bill Gray, the astronomer who first noticed that the object was on a collision course with the moon.</p> <p>But a National Aeronautics and Space Administration spacecraft orbiting the moon is being enlisted to help.</p>

“NASA’s Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter will use its cameras to attempt to identify the impact site and determine any potential changes to the lunar environment resulting from this object’s impact,” an agency spokesman said. “The search for the impact crater will be challenging and might take weeks to months.”

Mr. Gray, who runs Project Pluto, a Maine-based company that supplies software used to track the trajectories of near-Earth objects, said that extensive tracking data of the object made him “quite confident” that the impact occurred.

Space agencies have slammed spacecraft into the moon for more than 60 years to dispose of them or study the craters they form. And the moon is pocked with naturally occurring impact craters estimated to number in excess of 100,000. But Friday’s event marks the first [unintentional impact of human-made debris](#) on the lunar surface, according to the European Space Agency.

After rocket boosters or upper stages get used up during a launch, they can wind up orbiting the sun or fall back toward Earth, burning up as they re-enter the atmosphere. But sometimes—which seems to be the case here—spent rocket parts meander into higher, elongated orbits around the Earth and cross paths with the moon.

“People have put junk into higher orbits of this sort and just kind of forgotten about it,” Mr. Gray said.

He thought initially that the rocket body was that of a SpaceX Falcon 9 booster that launched an Earth-observation satellite seven years ago. But data from NASA’s Jet Propulsion Lab revealed the spacecraft’s initial trajectory—which Mr. Gray observed traveling between Earth and the moon in 2015—didn’t take it close enough to the moon to match that of the SpaceX launch.

In mid-February, Mr. Gray [said the debris in question](#) was instead a spent booster from a Chinese rocket that launched the nation’s Chang’e-5 T1 spacecraft in 2014.

Astronomers from the University of Arizona and NASA have since corroborated Mr. Gray’s re-identification.

During a February press conference, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said “the upper stage of the rocket related to the Chang’e-5 mission entered into Earth’s atmosphere and completely burned up.”

But the Chang’e-5 mission—a successor to Chang’e-5 T1—launched in 2020, not 2014. The Chinese space agency didn’t respond to a request for comment.

Mr. Gray said the misidentification could have been avoided had companies and agencies been more transparent about the location and movements of their spacecraft.

“If, for example, SpaceX had said, ‘This is where our booster was last seen,’ then I could have said this object wasn’t the SpaceX booster,” Mr. Gray added. SpaceX didn’t respond to a request for comment.

The U.S. Space Force tracks space objects in orbits up to about 22,250 miles above Earth because such debris could threaten global-positioning and telecommunication satellites as well as the International Space Station. NASA uses the tracking data to protect all agency assets from artificial space debris, the agency spokesman said.

But the moon is another 226,000 or so miles away—and no official entity is tracking the junk in between.

“It doesn’t fall under any jurisdiction,” said Jonathan McDowell, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics who keeps a catalog of space debris. And with [proliferating missions](#) aimed at establishing a long-term human presence on the moon, he added, “you probably don’t

	<p>want to leave things in this space unless you're confident that you've got enough tracking assets to not lose it."</p> <p>If settlements are established on the moon, he said, lunar impacts from debris could damage or destroy experimental apparatus or other infrastructure and harm residents.</p> <p>The region of space around the moon is much less crowded, according to Mr. Gray, who said he is now tracking a couple dozen objects. That number could quickly balloon, Dr. McDowell said, as more commercial players and smaller countries join the U.S., China and Russia in launching deep-space missions.</p> <p>"With the normalization of deep space has to come governance," he said.</p>
Return to Top	

Crime, Criminals

[Top of page](#)

HEADLINE	03/07 Europol: counterfeit, pirated imports surge
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/counterfeit-pirated-imports-surge/
GIST	<p>The import and distribution of fake and pirated goods have raised significant concerns about public health and the post-pandemic economic recovery, according to Europol.</p> <p>The policing organization's Intellectual property crime threat assessment 2022 warned of a growing trade in counterfeit goods – from clothes and luxury items to medicines, food and drink, cosmetics and toys.</p> <p>The estimated value of such goods in 2019 was €119bn or nearly 6% of total EU imports.</p> <p>However, the figure could be even higher today, thanks to the pandemic and the dominant role played by the internet in enabling such criminal activity, Europol warned.</p> <p>"Like many other criminal activities, counterfeiting now relies heavily on the digital domain to source components and distribute their products (both tangible and non-tangible) to consumers via online platforms, social media and instant messaging services. The COVID-19 pandemic has further entrenched this development," its report warned.</p> <p>"There is also evidence that counterfeiters launder their criminal proceeds by using both traditional and more sophisticated schemes that make use of technology, trade-based money laundering and offshore jurisdictions."</p> <p>In some cases, such as in the fashion space, fake goods are promoted via live-streaming sales, videos and sponsored ads on social media, with customers attracted by low prices and discounts.</p> <p>Counterfeiters are also exploiting the global shortage in semiconductors, with mobile phones and components among the most seriously impacted by IP infringement, Europol claimed.</p> <p>Digital piracy surged during the pandemic and remains a cat-and-mouse game between rights holders and infringers.</p> <p>"Websites illegally distributing audio-visual content are hosted on servers across Europe, Asia and the Middle East. The criminals involved are adept at using advanced technical countermeasures. In some cases, digital content piracy is linked to other cybercrime activities such as crypto-jacking or the distribution of malware," Europol said.</p>

	“Pirates exploit new technologies to conceal digital traces and use proxy services to create resilient hosting networks. The online presence during the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increased offer of high-quality streaming devices and a variety of illicit content offers.”
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/06 Surge in shootings rattle once-safe Seattle
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-cities-surge-in-shootings-rattles-once-safe-seattle-11646589942?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>SEATTLE—Dr. Deepika Nehra knew the only way to save the man on her operating table dying of a gunshot wound was to slice open his abdomen.</p> <p>Nights like this have become routine at Harborview Medical Center, where this once-peaceful city’s mounting toll of shootings has played out again and again during the past year.</p> <p>When the 39-year-old trauma surgeon tried to cut into the man’s midsection to stanch the bleeding, a brick of scar tissue blocked her way. It was from a previous gunshot wound. Unable to break through it quickly enough, she couldn’t stop the bleeding.</p> <p>Long one of America’s safest cities, Seattle had 612 shootings and shots-fired incidents last year, nearly double its average before the pandemic. The city has just experienced its two worst years for homicides since the 1990s, when murder rates were at all-time highs. Gunfire has erupted all across surrounding King County, not just in neighborhoods plagued by violence.</p> <p>“I stood by his side as he died and reflected on how needless his death was,” Dr. Nehra said. “The increase in gun-related injuries that we are seeing at Harborview and in Seattle is both palpable and just simply tragic. It will not let up.”</p> <p>Dan Satterberg, the top county prosecutor, recently filed murder charges against a 14-year-old alleged to have randomly gunned down one man in January and another in October. In over 30 years as a prosecutor, he said, he couldn’t recall charging a person so young with two killings.</p> <p>Seattle is one of many U.S. cities, from Los Angeles to Chicago to New York, that have seen shootings and killings jump since the onset of the pandemic. Several cities, including Albuquerque, Philadelphia and Portland, Ore., endured their deadliest year ever in 2021.</p> <p>Officials around the country are struggling to understand why. They point to a range of factors such as the social and institutional chaos wrought by the pandemic, which stalled efforts by community groups that steer young people away from crime. Officials also cite fallout from the sweeping protests over police killings, which led to a push to defund the police and a pullback by officers. Such protests were especially persistent in Seattle, where demonstrators took over a section of the Capitol Hill neighborhood for weeks in 2020.</p> <p>While Seattle’s murder rate remains lower than other major cities, it leapt above the U.S. average in 2020 for the first time in more than a decade. The shootings are reshaping facets of life in the metro area, and kindling tensions over the best ways to reduce them.</p> <p>A week ago, the owner of a bakery decided to shut her downtown location after a man was shot to death near the store entrance in broad daylight. On Wednesday night, a 15-year-old boy was shot and killed close by.</p> <p>Voters in the traditionally liberal-leaning city elected a tough-on-crime Republican as city attorney in November, and for mayor, picked a moderate Democrat who vowed to bolster the police force and combat gun violence.</p>

King County is dispatching what it calls peacekeepers to work with young people they have identified as prone to committing shootings, becoming shooting victims or both. Harborview hospital has hired a past shooting victim to counsel the crush of gunshot patients entering its doors, hoping to keep them from returning for the same reason.

Seattle Police Chief Adrian Diaz's phone buzzes with a text every time there is a shooting. It woke him just before 2 a.m. on July 25. A man had been shot in a fight outside a bar.

By the time the chief arrived at the chaotic scene, where officers were trying to hold the victim's wailing mother behind the police tape, his phone had buzzed again. This alert was for multiple shootings a mile away, where people were spilling out of nightclubs. Mr. Diaz sped there to find five men shot.

An hour later, another text: A woman was shot in the stomach. And an hour after that, a message saying a man was shot at a pickup basketball game. In all, three people were killed and five wounded in three hours, in a city that had long averaged 25 homicides a year.

"When you have a night like that, you're trying to figure out what's generating that level of violence," said Mr. Diaz, who joined the department in 1997.

Since the start of Covid-19, the chief said, there has been a noticeable spike in domestic disputes, bar fights and road rage. "People's stress level is at an all-time high," he said.

Nightly protests in the summer of 2020 after the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer pulled Mr. Diaz's officers away from their focus on gun violence, he said. The city council responded by cutting millions from the police department's budget, including cutting the salary of then-chief Carmen Best, part of a national push to reallocate police funds to social programs. Mr. Diaz became interim police chief in 2020 after Ms. Best, Seattle's first Black female police chief, resigned.

Demoralized officers have since left in droves, similar to other cities, said Travis Hill, a recently departed police sergeant who spent 14 years on the force. Letting protesters take over a precinct during the city's unrest in 2020 was particularly disheartening, he said. "When you don't feel the city has your back, your proactive work goes down," Mr. Hill said.

About 360 officers left Seattle's force in the past two years, leaving about 950 in the department to battle the rise in shootings. At the beginning of the pandemic, Seattle had 1,305 officers.

Stops and other activity initiated by officers dropped by 27% in 2021, and police response times reached historic highs, according to the department.

Mr. Diaz dealt with the loss of officers by shifting two-thirds of a unit devoted to gun violence back to patrol. He now is trying to rebuild that unit.

Police staffing and gun violence were a focus of Mayor Bruce Harrell's winning election campaign last fall. He routed City Council President M. Lorena González, who supported the cuts to Seattle's police department, by more than 17 points.

At a Feb. 4 news conference on gun violence, Mr. Harrell, who declined to be interviewed, said he was directing the police force to focus on the relatively few individuals authorities believe are behind most gun crimes, and on neighborhoods where violence is worst.

"I inherited a depleted and demoralized police department," said the mayor, a former University of Washington football standout. Mr. Harrell opposes police budget cuts and backs funding for community intervention programs.

"When I see what I continue to see out there, I can't sleep at night," said the mayor, who has been personally affected. A few months ago, a friend's son was shot and killed while trying to break up a fight.

Almost everyone shot in King County goes through Harborview hospital. It treated about 300 to 350 gunshot patients annually until two years ago. In 2020 there were around 400 and last year more than 500.

Frustrated with the number of people shot more than once, Dr. Nehra and her colleagues launched a pilot program last fall aimed at keeping patients from being shot again.

Harborview hired a past shooting victim named Paul Carter to shepherd patients toward nonprofit groups that steer people away from violence, an approach also being used in Durham, N.C., Birmingham, Ala., and a number of New Jersey cities.

At the bedside of young gunshot patients, Mr. Carter, 41, talks with them about how they reached this dangerous moment in their lives and gauges which services they'll need once they are discharged. His gravelly voice is a vestige of his own wound, which required surgery on his esophagus.

One patient Mr. Carter has worked with, a 16-year-old named John, arrived at Harborview the day before last Thanksgiving. John's torso was pocked with wounds from being shot at a bus stop following a dispute with two others.

His best friend was also shot in the incident. The best friend's father was murdered at the same bus stop two days later.

This was John's second visit to Harborview. Eight months earlier, he was there after taking a bullet in his right side during a fight at a gas station.

This time, John was in the hospital for nearly a month, allowing Mr. Carter to spend time with him and his mother, Gosefa Velázquez, a single mother also raising twin 12-year-olds. Ms. Velázquez said she moved her family from Louisiana to escape an abusive husband. She said John was traumatized by beatings from his father and from witnessing abuse she suffered. He got caught stealing and joined a gang.

Fearing John would die in the streets, Ms. Velázquez said, she felt relief whenever he ended up in a juvenile facility for crimes such as robbery. "I prefer to see my kid in jail than bring flowers to him when he's dead," she said.

John, meanwhile, said he wasn't worried about dying after his most recent shooting. "The only thing I'm thinking about is, 'Damn, I left the house without saying goodbye to my mom and my little brother and little sister,' " he said.

He showed flickers of self-reflection, like when he described how he would catch his little brother staring at his bullet wounds.

"I could see I was scaring him," John said. "I would say 'Look at my stomach, and remind yourself of what comes with this' " lifestyle.

Worried John wouldn't survive a third shooting, Mr. Carter connected him and his mother with a nonprofit called Community Passageways. It is one of several groups that, under a county- and city-funded program called the Regional Peacekeepers Collective, pinpoint young people thought likely to be involved in gun violence. The groups offer counseling, family assistance and job training, and respond when shootings happen to try to thwart retaliatory violence.

For months in 2020, because of Covid-19, such organizations couldn't meet with groups of young people in person. Zoom was less effective, and some participants stopped showing up. The police chief said the interruption of these programs especially hurt efforts to quell the rise in shootings.

"It was almost like everything shut down but the streets and the little homies in the streets," said Dominique Davis, who heads Community Passageways.

Last March, just as they were starting to meet in person again, Community Passageways held a meeting at a church with about 40 young people. A few hours in, a 22-year-old spotted a 19-year-old he believed had once shot him, pulled a gun and shot the younger man dead. The incident, recounted by Mr. Davis, traumatized his staff and left the group having to work to win back the trust of authorities.

A few months later, the gunman died in a shootout with Seattle police.

More than 60% of shootings in King County last year occurred outside the city. Last month, two mothers wandered the parking lot of Westfield Southcenter mall in Tukwila, a suburb, handing out flyers offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to an arrest in the shooting of their two teenagers.

Late on the afternoon of Nov. 24, one of the women, Jeanine Burnley, was doing holiday shopping at the mall with her family when she heard shots from the parking lot. She rushed over to find her 18-year-old son, Josiah, lying in her daughter's arms, shot multiple times. His girlfriend, 17-year-old Jashawna Hollingsworth, was face down in her own blood, Ms. Burnley said.

Josiah, a college freshman home on break, survived. Jashawna, a high-school senior who Ms. Burnley said planned to study nursing, died.

Ms. Burnley said she had no idea why they were targeted in the shooting, which police are still investigating. "Somebody needs to help us. We need to find out who killed Jashawna and who shot my son," Ms. Burnley said.

Late last year, mayors of four growing suburbs south of Seattle called a meeting with King County officials to discuss a raft of shootings in their areas. The mayors, from districts more politically moderate than Seattle, grew alarmed upon learning of a new approach the county was taking: putting some accused juvenile offenders under the charge of community groups instead of the courts.

Mr. Satterberg, the King County prosecuting attorney, said the program provides supervision in instances where, in the legal system, the offenders would likely just get probation and be back on the streets.

Mayor Jim Ferrell of Federal Way, a large suburb that had 11 murders in 2021, said the program shouldn't include juveniles who possess guns or bring them to school. Shootings have reached a tipping point, said Mr. Ferrell, a former prosecutor now running for the post held by Mr. Satterberg, who is retiring.

At an emotional Federal Way City Council meeting in early January, some residents fearful of rising crime spoke out against the program. Numerous people with the community groups argued it was critical to helping troubled young people.

A few weeks later, Mr. Ferrell was headed to his office when he learned of a double shooting in his city the night before. It appeared that two people had been shot in a parking lot. One was a 14-year-old boy.

At Harborview, Dr. Nehra, the trauma surgeon, recognized the teen when he was brought in. She had seen him before, when he had a gunshot in the leg.

This time he was struck in the groin area. He would survive, she said, at least this time.

Mr. Carter, who had counseled John, the young man shot along with his best friend just before Thanksgiving, learned of this latest shooting when his phone lighted up with a text. He, too, recognized the name of the boy who had just been shot. It was John's best friend.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Asian-Americans grapple w/attacks in NYC
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/06/nyregion/asian-woman-attacks.html

She was attacked as she swept up in front of her Queens home in November, beaten in the head with a rock so viciously that she was in a coma for weeks.

As GuiYing Ma battled for her life, other attacks on Asian women followed. A mentally ill man pushed Michelle Alyssa Go [to her death](#) at Times Square subway station in January. The next month, Christina Yuna Lee was followed to her apartment in Chinatown and [fatally stabbed](#) more than 40 times.

After each instance, Asian American groups and elected officials from across the political spectrum came out in force, demanding that more be done to address violence against members of their community.

But when it comes to strategies for fighting crime against Asians, unity has been much harder to find.

Many traditional organizations, including the merchant associations that once dominated community politics, have demanded more police officers on the streets, tougher prosecution and more restrictive bail laws. But liberals, including many of the city's younger Asian American elected officials, have taken the opposite tack, arguing against tougher policing and endorsing more progressive measures to address mental illness and homelessness.

"Half our community said, 'We don't trust the police,' but the other half said, 'We want a cop attached to every Asian,'" said Jo-Ann Yoo, the executive director of the Asian American Federation.

That dynamic was seen again last week, when it was announced that Ms. Ma, 62, who had immigrated from China four years ago, had [succumbed to her injuries](#) after nearly three months in the hospital. At a news conference on Tuesday, her husband, Zhanxin Gao, wiped tears from his eyes as he spoke of his wife, his high school sweetheart, and how the city needed to do more to prevent similar tragedies.

Mr. Gao, 62, called for a multipronged approach. The city should help homeless people find homes, he said, speaking through an interpreter, but he was also upset to learn that the man who was charged with beating his wife had been arrested numerous times. The Queens district attorney is weighing whether to upgrade the charge to reflect Ms. Ma's death.

"When I walk anywhere, I look left and right to see if anyone might be attacking me," Mr. Gao said. "I have been living in fear."

His sentiment was echoed by Justin Chin-Shan Yu, 76, the outgoing president of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association, one of the oldest community organizations in Chinatown. He said that Asian Americans were afraid and urged city officials to take decisive action.

The violence is part of an increasing trend. In 2020, the New York Police Department reported 28 bias incidents against Asians and made 23 arrests. In 2021, the police made 58 arrests and recorded 131 incidents — including the death on Dec. 31 of [Yao Pan Ma](#), a Chinese immigrant who was attacked while collecting cans in East Harlem last year.

Three weeks ago, a stranger [punched](#) a Korean diplomat in the face in Manhattan. Last Sunday, a man [attacked seven Asian women](#) within a two-hour period in Manhattan, the police said.

The spate of violence has helped to unite and energize Asian Americans, the fastest-growing ethnic group in the city. But the divisions over how to combat such a challenging problem highlight the growing pains of a diverse and ideologically discordant community as it develops into a potent political force.

Five members of the Asian American community were elected to the City Council last year. The State Assembly saw its first two South Asian members elected in 2020. Most of these politicians tend to be more aligned with a progressive movement that has sought to reform the criminal justice and mental health care systems.

Julie Won, a first-term councilwoman from Queens who is one of the two first Korean Americans to serve on the body, pointed out that the recent violent incidents demonstrate that more police officers and tougher policing are not the answer.

“Is it going to help you to lock people up after you’re dead?” Ms. Won said. “Or is it about prevention and long-term solutions to what leads to these violent crimes?”

On the flip side are elders and recent immigrants, who see more stringent law enforcement as the solution and have sided more closely with Mayor Eric Adams in calling for an increased police presence and changes to state laws to allow judges to consider dangerousness when setting bail.

“Asian American women are paying the price. Asian American seniors are paying the price,” said Mr. Yu, of the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association.

He called on Mayor Adams to place more uniformed officers on patrol and to continue to push the State Legislature to change the bail law, even though leaders in both the Senate and Assembly have [rejected such calls from the mayor](#).

“We don’t care about your social experiment,” Mr. Yu said. “We need our safety back.”

Charles Yoon, president of the Korean American Association of Greater New York, called for systemic solutions but also stiff enforcement of the law: “It’s a basic social contract that you are protected in society, and we want that to be honored.”

Mr. Adams has convened several meetings with leaders of the Asian American community; at the most recent one on Monday, some attendees first learned of Ms. Ma’s death.

During the meeting, the divide over the approach to crime was evident, several participants said afterward. Elected officials called for improved services for the homeless and mentally ill. Some community leaders said they wanted tough-on-crime solutions.

Mr. Adams pledged an emergency task force to focus on how mental health, homelessness and public safety are intertwined. The mayor, along with the schools chancellor, David Banks, is receptive to implementing an Asian American curriculum, an idea that leaders in Albany believe will help reduce the “otherness” factor that many believe help fuel such attacks.

Many leaders see that as part of an even more potent solution of recognizing and challenging the implicit biases in stereotypes about Asian Americans, including the oversexualization of Asian women and the idea that Asians may be easy targets in part because of a perceived vulnerability.

The pandemic, too, is viewed as a driver of the uptick in attacks against Asian Americans; the coronavirus originated in China, and some, including former President Donald J. Trump, blamed the Chinese for the virus’s spread.

“I’m not going to let Donald Trump off the hook for the drastic increase in incidents that happened literally weeks after he began using words like ‘kung flu’ and ‘Chinese virus,’” said Representative Grace Meng, a Queens Democrat who in 2012 became the first Asian American elected to Congress from New York.

Ms. Meng suggested that simply being tougher on crime was too facile an approach to addressing the violence against Asian Americans, a stance shared by State Senator John Liu, another long-serving elected official.

Mr. Liu, who represents northeast Queens, said a rise in crime has not been credibly linked to the bail law and added that calls to change it only demonstrate that the Asian American community has been

shaken by the attacks. “When people are scared,” Mr. Liu said, “they jump to conclusions in search of answers and protection.”

The fault lines over crime were visible in last year’s city election. An [exit poll](#) of nearly 1,400 Asian American voters conducted by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund after the June mayoral primary found that anti-Asian violence polled just one percentage point below the top issue, which was jobs and the economy.

Mr. Adams, who pushed a tough-on-crime platform as a mayoral candidate, recently replaced the head of the Hate Crime Task Force, Inspector Jessica Corey. The mayor said the unit had been too slow to label and investigate incidents as potential hate crimes. He said that the inspector’s reassignment was not an “indictment” of her work but acknowledged that he “wanted a new face there.”

The stakes for Democrats were apparent at the Republican State Convention earlier this week, where the party’s designated nominee, Representative Lee Zeldin, referenced the recent attacks on Asian Americans, and the state party announced [it was creating](#) an Asian American caucus.

Ron Kim, a Democratic assemblyman from Queens, has called on Gov. Kathy Hochul to declare a state of emergency and implement special measures to protect Asian Americans. Mr. Adams and Ms. Hochul recently announced a plan to send mental health workers and police into the subway to [remove the homeless people](#) who shelter there.

Mr. Liu and Assemblywoman Yuh-Line Niou, who is running to be the first Asian American woman elected to the State Senate, are also pushing for \$64.5 million to be included in the state budget to fund Asian American groups and to combat Asian bias.

The violence against Asian Americans has reignited opposition to planned homeless shelters in the city’s three Chinatowns — in Manhattan; Flushing, Queens; and Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Community leaders have expressed skepticism about the wisdom of placing homeless people facing mental illness into congregate shelters where they may not receive help. And opposition to building a new jail to replace the shuttered one in Chinatown in Lower Manhattan is growing.

“We’re a maturing community, and we’re learning how to navigate politics and policymaking in the city and the state,” said Wayne Ho, president and chief executive of the Chinese-American Planning Council. “There are going to be times where we as a community don’t always agree and times where we do not agree with legislators.”

What most Asian Americans leaders seem to publicly agree on is denouncing the impulse to view the crimes as a Black-on-Asian pattern. Racial divisions and stereotypes can “strain the community relationships that have been built,” said Vanessa Leung, who is co-executive director of the Coalition for Asian American Children and Families.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Large Everett fight; shots fired, 1 dead
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/1-dead-large-fight-everett-shooting/281-c2b4209d-9957-45b8-b338-df72227f4963
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. — One man is dead after a large fight in Everett lead to a deadly shooting Sunday morning.</p> <p>The Snohomish County Sheriff's Office responded to SW 128th Street and Fourth Avenue SW around 1:30 a.m. for a large fight with shots fired.</p> <p>The Snohomish County Sheriff's Office said it was reported 10 to 20 people were fighting in the area and that multiple shots had been fired.</p>

	<p>Arriving law enforcement officers found a man with a gunshot wound to the head. The victim, a 31-year-old Everett man, was pronounced dead at the scene.</p> <p>The Snohomish County Sheriff's Office said the suspect is unknown at this time.</p> <p>Authorities closed 128th Street from Fourth Avenue and Eighth Avenue West as the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office and major crimes detectives investigate.</p> <p>The Snohomish County Sheriff's Office said more information will be provided as the investigation develops.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/06 Shootings Graham, Spanaway bars; 1 dead
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article259123673.html
GIST	<p>A pair of overnight shootings at bars in Graham and Spanaway killed one man and severely wounded another Sunday, according to the Pierce County Sheriff's Department.</p> <p>Shortly before 2 a.m., sheriff's deputies responded to a reported shooting in the 9800 block of 224th Street East in Graham. Initial information said one man had been shot, and the suspect was still at the scene.</p> <p>Deputies found a 26-year-old man with a gunshot wound in the road. He died at the scene, the department said in a statement.</p> <p>The suspected shooter, a 25-year-old man, fled on an ATV and drove into a nearby field. Reports suggested the man was armed and hiding. Deputies called for a K-9 unit, and located the man with the help of the dog and thermal imagery.</p> <p>The man was arrested and booked into the Pierce County Jail on suspicion of first-degree murder.</p> <p>The fatal incident in Graham followed an earlier shooting in Spanaway. Reports do not suggest the incidents were related.</p> <p>The dispatch call in the Spanaway incident came at 1:21 a.m. Deputies responded to a bar in the 19300 block of Mountain Highway East, near the Roy Y intersection. Initial 911 calls said the shooting followed a concert, according to an account from the Sheriff's Department.</p> <p>The victim was not at the scene when deputies arrived. Witnesses said the man left in a car. Deputies soon found the vehicle and the wounded 38-year-old man a few blocks to the north. He was transported to a local hospital with life-threatening injuries.</p> <p>Investigators did not locate the suspected shooter. The investigation is ongoing.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/07 Russia snubs UN court hearings
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/russia-snubs-court-hearings-case-brought-ukraine-83292403
GIST	<p>THE HAGUE, Netherlands -- A representative for Kyiv urged the United Nations' top court on Monday to order Russia to halt its devastating invasion of Ukraine, at a hearing snubbed by Russia amid its ongoing assault on its neighbor.</p> <p>Ukrainian representative Anton Korynevych told judges at the International Court of Justice: "Russia must be stopped and the court has a role to play in stopping it."</p> <p>Ukraine has asked the court to order Russia to "immediately suspend the military operations" launched Feb. 24 "that have as their stated purpose and objective the prevention and punishment of a claimed genocide" in the separatist eastern regions of Luhansk and Donetsk.</p>

Lawyers for Kyiv dismissed the Russian claim.

"Ukraine comes to this court because of a grotesque lie and to seek protection from the devastating consequences of that lie," David Zions told the court. "The lie is the Russian Federation's claim of genocide in Ukraine. The consequences are unprovoked aggression, cities under siege, civilians under fire, humanitarian catastrophe and refugees fleeing for their lives."

A decision on Ukraine's request is expected within days.

If the court were to order a halt to hostilities, "I think the chance of that happening is zero," said Terry Gill, a professor of military law at the University of Amsterdam. He noted that if a nation does not abide by the court's order, judges could seek action from the United Nations Security Council, where Russia holds a veto.

Russia's seats at the Great Hall of Justice in the court's Peace Palace headquarters were empty for the hearing.

The court's president, American judge Joan E. Donoghue, said Russia's ambassador to the Netherlands, Alexander Shulgin, informed judges that "his government did not intend to participate in the oral proceedings."

Korynevych condemned Moscow's snub.

"The fact that Russian seats are empty speaks loudly," he said. "They are not here in this court of law. They are on a battlefield waging aggressive war against my country."

The request for so-called provisional measures is linked to a case Ukraine has filed based on the Genocide Convention. Both countries have ratified the 1948 treaty, which has a clause allowing nations to take disputes based on its provisions to the Hague-based court.

"Ukraine emphatically denies that any such genocide has occurred, and that the Russian Federation has any lawful basis to take action in and against Ukraine for the purpose of preventing and punishing genocide," the country said in its claim to the court.

Ukraine's nine-page legal filing launching the case argues that "Russia has turned the Genocide Convention on its head" by making a false claim. It adds that "Russia's lie is all the more offensive, and ironic, because it appears that it is Russia planning acts of genocide in Ukraine."

The success of Ukraine's request will depend on whether the court accepts it has "prima facie jurisdiction" in the case, which is not a guarantee that the court ultimately would proceed with the suit. Cases at the International Court of Justice typically take years to complete.

Regardless of the outcome of the hearings, they give Ukraine another platform to air grievances about Moscow's invasion.

"It's part of, I think, an overall diplomatic strategy to try to put maximum pressure on Russia," said Gill.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Mexico soccer riot leaves 22 injured
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/05/world/americas/mexico-soccer-riot.html
GIST	MEXICO CITY — A soccer game in central Mexico descended into violent clashes between fans of the opposing teams on Saturday. The authorities said 22 people had been injured, two of them critically.

The match, in a stadium in the city of Querétaro, was called off after just over an hour of play as fans began attacking one another, provoking panic among other spectators, many of whom ran onto the field, according to news reports and videos from the scene.

Shocking footage posted on social media showed groups of men dragging people across the concrete outside the stadium, kicking and beating them and ripping off their clothes. Another video showed a topless man being beaten and whipped.

“I strongly condemn today’s violence at the Corregidora Stadium,” Mauricio Kuri, the governor of Querétaro State, said on Twitter. “I have given instructions to apply the law with all its consequences.”

Atlas, the defending champion of Liga MX, the Mexican soccer league, had been leading Querétaro’s team 1-0 when the fighting broke out in the stands. The violence soon spread onto the field and into the area around the stadium, according to videos shared online.

Liga MX said in a statement that it had begun “an in-depth investigation into what happened in the stands, on the pitch and outside the building during the match.” The league’s executive president, Mikel Arriola, said all matches scheduled for Sunday would be suspended.

“Liga MX will undertake an in-depth revision of our security protocols,” Mr. Arriola said in a video posted on Twitter. “We strongly condemn what happened tonight and our commitment is to act so that there is no impunity in the face of these unfortunate events.”

The disciplinary commission of the Mexican Football Federation said it had also opened an investigation.

A match last year between Atlas, a Guadalajara-based club, and their local rivals the Chivas was also marred by violence among fans, and an October 2019 match between Querétaro and Atlético de San Luis was suspended after several spectators were injured in clashes. In 2015, fans of Atlas invaded the pitch during another match against Chivas; the subsequent violence saw 10 people detained and at least nine injured, news outlets reported.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 WNBA star arrested in Russia: drug charge
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/wnba-star-brittney-griner-arrested-by-russian-customs-officials-on-drug-charges-11646502380?mod=hp_featst_pos5
GIST	<p>American basketball player Brittney Griner, one of the WNBA’s biggest stars, was arrested last month by Russian customs officials at a Moscow airport on suspicion of drug smuggling after authorities said they found vape cartridges with hashish oil in her luggage.</p> <p>Griner has been held in custody since arriving from New York on an unspecified date in February, according to the Russian federal customs service, which didn’t name Griner as the suspect but described her as a WNBA player and member of the U.S. national team. Russian state agency TASS identified her, citing a source in law enforcement.</p> <p>Authorities said they were launching an investigation after opening a criminal case. The smuggling of narcotic substances on a substantial scale in Russia carries a sentence of potential imprisonment for up to 10 years.</p> <p>Russia’s detention of a prominent American athlete as it invades Ukraine and sparks a war in Europe promises to be a matter of international concern that deepens the complexity of the diplomatic landscape.</p> <p>Griner, a 31-year-old WNBA champion and perennial All-Star, is one of many American women’s basketball players who spend their winters in Russia. There they command annual salaries of more than \$1 million, nearly five times the WNBA’s maximum salary. Since 2014, Griner has played for the Russian</p>

powerhouse UMMC Ekaterinburg, which has also been the home of U.S. stars like Diana Taurasi, Sue Bird and Breanna Stewart.

The WNBA said last week that all of the league's players in Ukraine had fled the country and many players in Russia were making plans to exit. The State Department advises U.S. citizens in Russia to consider departing.

Griner, a dunking standout in college at Baylor University and two-time Olympic gold medalist with Team USA, [reportedly earned as much as \\$1.5 million playing in Russia](#), which competes with China and Turkey for the top WNBA talent in the league's offseason. Griner's contract with the Phoenix Mercury pays \$227,900 next season after a [labor deal struck in 2020](#) increased the WNBA's maximum salary by more than \$100,000.

Russian authorities said that Griner was arriving from New York when a drug-sniffing dog detected "the possible presence of narcotic substances" and X-ray screening of her luggage found electronic vape cartridges with hashish oil.

The WNBA and the Phoenix Mercury released statements on Saturday expressing their support for Griner and hoping for her safe return to the U.S.

Lindsay Kagawa Colas, Griner's agent, said that she remained in close contact with Griner, her legal representation in Russia, her teams in both countries and the WNBA and NBA.

"As this is an ongoing legal matter, we are not able to comment further on the specifics of her case," she said, "but can confirm that as we work to get her home, her mental and physical health remain our primary concern."

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Global sexual abuse allegations in soccer
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/mar/05/from-afghanistan-to-zimbabwe-sexual-abuse-allegations-in-football-around-the-world
GIST	<p>Over the past few years, allegations of abuse have been reported from a number of countries and there is a sense that this is just the beginning.</p> <p>Below is a list of countries where allegations of sexual abuse have been reported in the past few years. Not all of the accusations have been tested through investigations.</p> <p>Afghanistan Allegations: Afghanistan football federation president Keramuudin Karim was accused of physically and sexually abusing several young female players from the national team.</p> <p>Status: Banned for life from all football-related activity and fined one million Swiss francs by Fifa in June 2019.</p> <p>Argentina Allegations: In May 2021, a number of high-profile female footballers in Argentina claimed they had been bullied and sexual harassed by a youth-team coach working for the country's Football Association to Fifa.</p> <p>Status: The result of a Fifa investigation is pending.</p> <p>Australia Allegations: The former Matildas captain Lisa De Vanna said in early October 2021 that she had been the victim of sexual assault, harassment and bullying throughout her career with Rhali Dobson, another former W-League player, also stating that she had suffered abuse.</p>

Status: On 22 October Sport Integrity Australia and Football Australia launched “an [independent complaints and reports handling](#), investigation, and disciplinary framework”. They received submissions until the end of January, 2022, but have not yet published the findings.

Barbados

Allegations: Former technical director [Ahmed Mohamed](#) was accused of misconduct towards a senior female player in February 2021. A group of 27 senior players wrote to the BFA’s president demanding he was removed. Mohamed did not respond to a request for comment from the Guardian.

Status: Mohamed left his post for “family reasons” and is now director of football in St Kitts. [Fifa has said it will request](#) more details about the appointment, while the Concacaf confederation [has expressed](#) its “extreme surprise and concern” that the [St Kitts and Nevis](#) Football Association claimed it consulted Concacaf over his appointment.

Canada

Allegations: Multiple allegations of sexual assault and harrasment were made [in October 2019](#) against the former Vancouver Whitecaps and Canada Women Under-20 coach Bob Birarda and he was [arrested in 2020](#), charged with six counts of sexual exploitation, two counts of sexual assault, and one count of child luring over a 20-year period between 1988 and 2008.

Status: Last month, Birarda pleaded guilty to four charges of sexual offence, including three counts of sexual assault and one count of sexual touching while in a position of authority. He will be sentenced later this year.

Colombia

Allegations: [In June 2020](#), Carolina Rosa – the former physio for the Colombia Under-17 women’s team – claimed she was sexually abused at the hands of the coach Didier Luna.

Status: Luna agreed a plea deal with the prosecutor’s office in June 2020 that meant he avoided prison by agreeing to a reduced charge of ‘injuria’, essentially an admission of occasional, one-off harassment.

Comoros

Allegations: Accusations of past sexual abuse by the coach Youssouf Ahamada Bachirou, from several players, including from the former Comoros international Khaled Simba, who spoke to [Norwegian magazine Josimar](#) and posted a video of his alleged experienced in January 2022. Bachirou has denied the allegations.

Status: The alleged offences were reported to local police, who opened an investigation in January.

Ecuador

Allegations: [In 2019](#) Luis Pescarolo, the coach of Ecuador’s senior women’s team, was accused of sending a player “provocative messages”, including a request to engage in sexual activity. Pescarolo said the accusations “were false” and “insults towards the coaching staff”.

Status: Pescarolo [was sacked](#) in April 2019.

Gabon

Allegations: Patrick Assoumou Eyi – known as “Capello” – has been [accused of abusing boys](#) in his previous role as the head coach of Gabon’s under-17 team. Serge Mombo, a leading football official in the country, has also been accused of [sexually abusing young players](#) and demanding sex as a condition of them securing places in national teams. Both deny the allegations.

Status: Eyi and two other coaches facing charges including attempted rape on minors and endangering the life of another. Serge Mombo [was arrested](#) over the allegations on his return from the Africa Cup of Nations in January 2022.

Haiti

Allegations: In 2020, there were accusations of [systematic abuse](#) of minors at the National Football centre by the president, Yves Jean-Bart, and other officials including head of referees, Rosnick Grant.

Status: [Jean-Bart](#) (2020) and [Grant](#) (2021) were banned from all football-related activities for life by Fifa.

Malawi

Allegations: In August 2021, the international footballer Tabitha Chawinga called on Malawi's football authorities to [introduce safeguards](#) to protect women from abuse at all levels of the game. She claimed she had been forced to strip in public in 2009 and in 2010 to prove she was female and was regularly trolled on social media about her looks.

Status: One of her clubs, DD Sunshine, said they lodged a complaint at the time with the Football Association of Malawi but did not get a response. Alfred Gunda, general secretary of the Football Association of Malawi who was not at the organisation when the complaint was made by Chawinga's club, said in August 2021: "What happened is not right and we cannot condone it and that's why we encourage that officials ... that any incidents that happen are reported and the right measures are taken so that we protect our girls."

Mongolia

Allegations: The youth coach Uchraisaikhan Buuveibaatar was accused of sexually harassing and physically assaulting young players from girls' Under-15 team during the East Asian Football Festival in South Korea in 2019. He denies committing "sexual crimes".

Status: Buuveibaatar was first suspended from all football-related activities in August 2019 by the Mongolian Football Federation's disciplinary body, which reported the matter three months later to the Asian Football Confederation (AFC). The AFC told the Guardian that Buuveibaatar's "sanction was extended worldwide by Fifa in August 2021" but football's world governing body [failed to announce it publicly](#).

Netherlands

Allegations: In 2021, a youth coach was accused of forcing his underage players to have sex with women he exploited. Separately, the former Vitesse Arnhem youth player Renald Majoor said he was sexually abused by a coach at the club when he was a youth player at the club (1996).

Status: The youth coach forcing his players into having sex with the women he exploited was sentenced to three years in prison in December 2021 for human trafficking, possessing and making child pornography, and exploiting young, vulnerable women. The coach at Vitesse, who died in 2011, was suspended by the club, according to Dutch newspaper Volkskrant.

Sierra Leone

Allegations: In October 2021 the head coach of Sierra Leone's women's football team Abdulai Bah [was suspended](#) with immediate effect over allegations of "professional misconduct". The decision came a few days after the SLFA said it would investigate allegations of sexual harassment and intimidation of players in its women's national teams. Bah has dismissed the allegations against him as "completely untrue and unfounded".

Status: Bah has stepped aside pending investigations. The SLFA opened an investigation but there have been no recent updates.

United Kingdom

Allegations: Former players from Crewe and Manchester City accused former coach Barry Bennell of multiple counts of sexual abuse. Several more youth players from the 1970s and 1980s came forward to allege similar abuse at other clubs.

Status: In 2021, the Football Association, Premier League and leading clubs issued formal apologies after [a landmark inquiry](#) said that generations of young footballers suffered horrific sexual abuse because of the wholesale absence of child protection policies, ignorance and naivety. Bennell is serving a 34-year jail term after being convicted on five separate occasions of [child sexual abuse offences against 22 boys](#).

United States

Allegations: In 2021, the North Carolina Courage coach [Paul Riley](#) was accused of alleged sexual harassment of the players Sinead Farrelly and Meleana Shim. Riley has denied the allegations.

Status: Riley was sacked by the club and Fifa and US Soccer opened investigations.

Venezuela

Allegations: Twenty-four Venezuela internationals signed a letter in October 2021 accusing their former coach Kenneth Zseremeta of psychological and sexual abuse, and harassment over sexual orientation. He has denied the accusations.

Status: The Venezuelan football federation said it has asked Fifa, Conmebol and Concacaf to investigate and the country's public prosecutor has opened an investigation.

Zimbabwe

Allegations: Two female referees accused Zifa's referees committee secretary general, Obert Zhoya and its chairman, Bryton Malandule [of sexual harassment](#) in September 2020. Malandule told the Guardian: "I am sure that you appreciate that when issues are before judicial bodies, one cannot comment as per the *sub judice* rule." while Zhoya did not respond to the Guardian's request to comment.

Status: The allegations are being investigated by the police in Zimbabwe. Both men remain in their positions while neither referee has officiated since making the allegations.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/06 Gathering evidence war crimes in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/law/2022/mar/06/leave-no-stone-untuned-how-investigators-gather-evidence-of-war-crimes-in-ukraine
GIST	<p>Ukrainians fleeing the scenes of destruction and carnage in Ukraine are already being interviewed by investigators in anticipation of a future war crimes trial of Vladimir Putin, along with his top officials and generals.</p> <p>With well over a million refugees crossing the border, there is an abundance of eyewitness testimony, while the flow of video footage through social media has provided an unprecedented amount of evidence which is being subjected to forensic analysis.</p> <p>However, the sheer quantity of evidence is not necessarily a guarantee of a successful trial, and experienced war crimes investigators warn there is a long war to go before Putin and his regime are in the dock, in person or in absentia.</p> <p>Multiple investigations have been launched at the same time, and it is not clear to what extent they are coordinated, if at all.</p> <p>The prosecutor of the international criminal court (ICC) in The Hague has opened an investigation, after a petition by an unprecedented 39 member states, and will almost certainly receive the most governmental support.</p> <p>For example London's Metropolitan police's war crimes team has said it will gather evidence from any UK sources. The UN Human Rights Council has established a commission of inquiry, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe has set up an expert mission. Meanwhile, several governments are</p>

helping the Ukrainian judicial system directly in the collection and safeguarding of evidence of atrocities committed on its territory.

The first organisation to start work was the [Pilecki Institute](#), a Polish thinktank studying the nature and impact of totalitarian regimes. It has set up the Raphael Lemkin Centre for the Documentation of Russian Crimes in Ukraine, named after the Polish Jewish lawyer who coined the word “genocide” and drafted the Genocide Convention.

It has already deployed researchers to start interviews in the hotels and community centres in Poland hosting refugees, and is recruiting more Ukrainian speakers.

“The scale of tragedy among civilians will be unbelievable, so every testimony is important, every detail is important,” said Magdalena Gawin, the institute’s director. She added that the centre is also in touch with Ukrainians from inside the country, sending information from the frontlines.

Bill Wiley, a Canadian ex-soldier who worked on both the Yugoslavia and Rwanda tribunals, cautions that the testimony from refugees who have crossed the border recently may have limited use in future war crimes trials.

Wiley now runs the Commission for International Justice and Accountability (CIJA) which has gathered documentary evidence of war crimes in Syria. The archives CIJA amassed helped lead to a life sentence imposed by a German court in January on a former Syrian colonel, [Anwar Raslan](#), for crimes against humanity.

“It’s extremely difficult to build these cases because you don’t know what the attacking force is trying to hit,” Wiley said. “When you’re in a war of movement, it is very, very difficult, because the violence is constantly moving. International humanitarian law makes tremendous allowance - more than people realise - for incidental, or what the media calls collateral damage.”

Wiley predicts the worst, most obvious, war crimes are likely to come if Russian forces manage to subdue and occupy Ukrainian cities.

“This is where I think we’re gonna see pretty serious criminality,” he said. “That’s where we’re going to see assassinations, disappearances, mass arrests, physical psychological abuse, serious physical, psychological abuse.”

In previous war crimes cases, it has often been more straightforward to prove who committed an atrocity than to convict the chain of command that ordered it to be carried out.

“The crime base evidence is always the easier part,” said Clint Williamson, a former US ambassador-at-large for war crimes issues. “Linking it back to particular military units, linking it up the chain of command, is always the more challenging part of it.”

David Scheffer, an American lawyer who was first US war crimes envoy, predicted that such challenges could be less daunting in the case of Ukraine, than in other conflicts.

“Command responsibility is difficult to prosecute, but in this case I would expect it to be easier to prove in a courtroom as this is a superpower military with a definite chain of command and an obviously autocratic leader, Putin, who is leaving lots of footprints,” Scheffer said.

Once the evidence is gathered, the question will arise of which court should try the cases. The first two decades of the ICC’s existence have been difficult because the US, Russia and China have refused to join. Under the Trump administration, the US even sanctioned ICC prosecutors in an effort to stop investigations of the conflicts in Afghanistan and the occupied Palestinian territories.

	<p>In the case of Ukraine however, the US has offered to supply information to the court. Ukraine has given the ICC jurisdiction to investigate on its territory, so the prosecutor, Karim Khan, can begin to build cases for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.</p> <p>However, because Ukraine is not a party to the court (its parliament never ratified its membership), and because a Russian veto will stop it ever being referred by the UN security council, the ICC cannot address the crime of aggression. Philippe Sands, a law professor and director of the Centre on international courts and tribunals at University College London, said that is a “big gap” when it comes to accountability for Ukraine.</p> <p>The crime of aggression, Sands said at a Chatham House discussion last week, “is the only crime which allows those responsible for the totality of the terrible events we are now witnessing to be held to account, to be judged.”</p> <p>With the support of Ukraine’s foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, former UK prime minister, Gordon Brown, among legal experts from around the world, Sands is seeking to persuade governments to fill the vacuum by setting up a special international criminal tribunal to try Putin and his regime for the overarching crime of waging an illegal war.</p> <p>“If we’re committed to standing up for what is, in my view, a naked lawless act of aggression, we must leave no stone unturned,” he said.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/05 SPD officers fatally shoot man downtown
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-police-on-scene-of-possible-fatal-officer-involved-shooting
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Several officers from the Seattle Police Department fatally shot a man authorities said was armed and allegedly fired his rifle and rammed his vehicle into the federal building in downtown Saturday night, sending panicked bystanders scrambling for cover.</p> <p>The unidentified man died at the scene and police have launched an investigation into what occurred.</p> <p>Representatives from the city's Office of Police Accountability, the civilian-review board, and the Office of Inspector General, were dispatched to the scene to launch a probe into the fatal officer-involved shooting, according to the police statement.</p> <p>Seattle police officers were called to the 100 block of Marion Street near 1st Ave. and Yesler Street shortly after 8 p.m. for multiple reports of shots fired, according to a written statement issued by police.</p> <p>When officers arrived, they found the man in the 100 block of Marion Street after crashing his vehicle into the Federal building. The police statement said the officers tried to speak to the man but opened fire.</p> <p>The police statement said "for reasons that remain under investigation," the officers fatally shot the man.</p> <p>Several officers responded to the scene during and after the shooting.</p> <p>Confirmation that it was a fatal officer-involved incident initially came from the Seattle Fire Department when a spokesperson told KOMO News that aid crews had responded to a fatal incident at the location.</p> <p>Police erected yellow crime scene tape and asked people to avoid the area while they investigated what happened.</p> <p>Bystanders in the area reported hearing multiple shots fired and customers at businesses in the area ran for cover at the sound of gunfire.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/04 Journalist killed in Mexico; 7th this year
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/04/seventh-journalist-killed-mexico
GIST	<p>A journalist has been killed in the central Mexican state of Zacatecas, becoming the seventh killed in the country so far this year.</p> <p>Juan Carlos Muñiz, who covered crime for the online news site Testigo Minero in Fresnillo, was killed on Friday, according to the state governor David Monreal.</p> <p>“Solidarity with his family, friends and colleagues,” said Monreal. “There can be no impunity for this.”</p> <p>Alfredo Valadez, also a journalist, said Muñiz also drove a taxi in the city to make ends meet.</p> <p>The Zacatecas state prosecutor’s office said via Twitter it had opened an investigation and would follow protocols for cases that could be crimes against freedom of expression.</p> <p>Zacatecas is one of Mexico’s most violent states. In January, the bodies of eight men and two women were found crammed into a pickup truck left before dawn near a Christmas tree in the main plaza of the state capital, also named Zacatecas.</p> <p>Fresnillo lies about 37 miles (60km) north-west of the state capital and is the state’s second largest city. It has a long history as a mining center.</p> <p>One of the websites Muñiz wrote for, the Miners’ Witness in English, wrote in a statement that “the cowardly murder of our friend and companion has caused shock among the majority of the public in Fresnillo and the state, as well as in journalistic circles.”</p> <p>The site said “this social breakdown has wounded our state and our city, and is out of control”.</p> <p>Mexico has for years been one of the world’s most dangerous countries for journalists. But the pace of killings this year has been shocking and even drew an expression of concern from US secretary of state Antony Blinken last month.</p> <p>Journalists are often the targets of Mexico’s drug cartels, which seek to intimidate and manipulate coverage of their activities and their rivals. Local politicians and government officials are also frequently linked to murders, and impunity in those killings runs above 90%.</p> <p>President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has promised there will not be impunity in the killings, while at the same time regularly attacking journalists critical of his administration.</p>
	Return to Top

HEADLINE	03/04 L.A. ex-deputy charged 2019 fatal shooting
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/mar/04/los-angeles-sheriffs-deputy-charged-killing-ryan-twyman
GIST	<p>The Los Angeles district attorney has filed manslaughter charges against a former sheriff’s deputy who fatally shot an unarmed man in 2019, an extremely rare prosecution for an on-duty officer killing in the US.</p> <p>Andrew Lyons, 37, is facing charges of voluntary manslaughter and two counts of assault with a semiautomatic firearm for the 6 June 2019 killing of Ryan Twyman, in Willowbrook in south LA, the district attorney’s office announced on Thursday.</p> <p>Video of Twyman’s killing, which happened in under a minute, appeared to show two sheriff’s deputies driving up to an apartment complex and getting out of their car with guns pointed at a parked vehicle. As the officers approached, the car appeared to reverse, and both deputies fired at the vehicle. They continued shooting from a distance as the car rolled. Lyons returned to his car, opened the trunk, grabbed a larger rifle and continued shooting at the motionless car.</p>

The deputies fired a total of 34 rounds, and Twyman, who was in the driver's seat, was killed. The sheriff's department terminated Lyons after the killing, [according to the Los Angeles Times](#). The second officer who fired at Twyman was not charged.

The killing of Twyman, a 24-year-old father of three, intensified [scrutiny of the sheriff's department](#) and raised fresh questions about its high number of police killings and allegations of racial profiling.

Charges such as the ones brought against Lyons are a rare occurrence in the US, where police rarely face criminal charges for on-duty killings. Many state laws [dictate](#) that deadly force is justified and lawful when officers say they feared for their lives, and juries have been hesitant to condemn officers' decisions.

Police fatally shoot more than 1,000 people across the country each year, and a recent Washington Post [analysis](#) found that there was a rise in killings in 2021. Less than 2% of fatal shootings by officers [result](#) in charges, experts [estimate](#), and one analysis [found](#) that just 5% of officers charged for killings ultimately face murder convictions.

George Gascón, the LA district attorney, was elected in 2020 on promises of holding police accountable, taking over the largest local prosecutor's office in the country and becoming one of the most prominent district attorneys championing progressive policies. He [ousted an incumbent](#) who faced weekly protests from Black Lives Matter LA for [failing to charge officers for killings](#). The charges against Lyons mark the first by Gascón for an on-duty killing by police, though he [filed assault charges](#) against an officer last year who shot and injured a civilian.

"Protecting public safety is the highest responsibility for the entire law enforcement community. That extends first and foremost to those sworn to protect it," Gascón said in a [statement](#) on Thursday. "Policing is a difficult and trying job, but it does not excuse anyone from accountability under the law – especially when a human life is lost."

"Finally, I can see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel for justice for Ryan Twyman and our family," said Chiquita Twyman, Ryan's sister, on Friday.

"The justice system is tainted and has us Black and brown people feeling like the system doesn't work for us," she said. "[The charges] made it feel like it's possible that someone in the justice system knows that Mr Lyons was wrong and that there needs to be accountability for the murder of my brother. He was negligent that day and had no business being a police officer ... We will forever hurt because of his negligence."

Tyman's family had advocated for criminal charges for years and had alleged other abuses by the sheriff's department. Months after the killing, Charles Twyman, Ryan's father, told the Guardian that harassment from the sheriff's department (LASD) was "a way of life" in the neighborhood, saying, "They talk about gangs in the inner city. Who is the bigger gang?"

In an ACLU report published last year, the Twyman family also alleged that the sheriff's department frequently harassed them in retaliation for speaking out – showing up at family events without cause, for example.

LASD declined to comment on the claims at the time and did not respond to a request for comment on Friday.

Lyons, 37, was scheduled for arraignment on Friday. It was not immediately clear if he had a lawyer.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 OR: Feds seize 150,000 fake pills w/fentanyl
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/feds-seize-3-9m-worth-of-fentanyl-in-oregon-drug-bust/

GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Narcotics agents seized about 150,000 counterfeit oxycodone pills made with fentanyl and about 20 pounds of fentanyl powder in what federal authorities believe is the biggest seizure of the drug in Oregon’s history, authorities said.</p> <p>The Oregonian/OregonLive reports the street value of the drugs seized Thursday is estimated at \$3.9 million, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Scott Kerin.</p> <p>Four men are charged with conspiring to distribute and possess with intent to distribute 400 grams or more of fentanyl.</p> <p>They are Ufrano Orozco Munoz, 27, Abraham Vera Enriquez, 29, Jesus Miguel Zamora Cruz, 36, and Jose Javier Valdez Paramo, 32. It wasn’t immediately known if any of them have attorneys who can comment on the case.</p> <p>Officers seized the drugs this week during a drug buy between the men and a federal informant in an Oregon City parking lot, according to a Homeland Security Investigations agent.</p> <p>One of the men removed a black bag from the trunk of a vehicle, showed the informant the drugs and told the informant additional drugs were concealed in a speaker box, according to the agent’s affidavit in support of a criminal complaint.</p> <p>Investigators then seized the drugs and arrested the men, the affidavit said.</p> <p>“To say that the defendants are significant drug dealers is an understatement,” Kerin wrote to the court in a memo seeking the four men’s continued detention.</p> <p>Orozco Munoz was arrested earlier this year in Arizona after he was found with 50,000 counterfeit pills made with fentanyl, Kerin said. He posted bail and fled to Mexico, according to federal prosecutors.</p> <p>He’s accused of contacting a federal informant in February who was working in Arizona and advising the informant that he had a family member living in Oregon who could get him hundreds of thousands of counterfeit pills, according to federal prosecutors.</p> <p>The four men charged remain in custody in the Multnomah County Detention Center.</p> <p>Drug dealers regularly sell counterfeit oxycodone pills, manufacturing them with fentanyl and attempting to replicate the real pills.</p> <p>Oregon Medical Examiner Dr. Sean Hurst told lawmakers earlier this year that there were 237 fentanyl-related overdose deaths in the state in the first half of 2021, up from 230 during the same period in 2020 and a significant jump from the 75 recorded in the first half of 2019.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/04 Whatcom Co. deputies sue accused shooter
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/whatcom-deputies-sue-man-accused-shooting-them/5LTUSTBHBRC2TDNL7IUCJUJBH4/
GIST	<p>WHATCOM COUNTY, Wash. — Two Whatcom County sheriff’s deputies on Friday sued the man charged with shooting them.</p> <p>Deputies Jason Thompson and Ryan Rathbun were shot Feb. 10 in Maple Falls.</p> <p>Prosecutors say Joel Young shot at both deputies after neighbors called 911 to say Young had been firing his shotgun because he was upset with someone burning trash.</p> <p>Deputy Thompson was shot first.</p>

“Initially, I believed I was dead,” Thompson told reporters.

“I saw my best friend go flying backwards,” Rathbun said.

As he rushed in to help, prosecutors say Young also shot Rathbun.

Both deputies were struck in their faces and face long, uncertain recoveries.

Young is already charged with several crimes, including attempted murder.

Thompson and Rathbun just filed a personal injury lawsuit against him.

Their attorney, Daniel Horne, says they will be “going after absolutely every asset, every policy, everything that Joel Young has.”

After they were shot, the deputies say several neighbors shot at Young, driving him back into his house, where he was later arrested.

“The fact that they would step up and put themselves in danger for us speaks very highly of the neighborhood we have up there,” Thompson said.

Both Thompson and Rathbun were assigned to the portion of the county that includes Maple Falls, and say they are grateful for the community support.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/05 Employer jailed for worker's death; WA first
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/historic-decision-employer-faces-jail-time-workers-death-trench-collapse/RX4SMDOPAJEMJGDS4CWCJPXY2Y/
GIST	<p>KING COUNTY, Wash. — Six years after a 36-year-old construction worker died in a trench collapse, the man's boss will serve jail time.</p> <p>It is the first time in Washington state history that an employer has been criminally held accountable for a worker's death.</p> <p>And prosecutors expect there will be more criminal cases like this.</p> <p>“It seems like a lifetime without the embrace of my husband's arms,” said Jenna Felton, who has been placed in a historic, yet horrific position as it took the loss of her husband, Herold Felton, for Washington's legal system to be changed forever.</p> <p>In court Friday she said, “Safety equipment is indispensable because life is just too precious to lose.”</p> <p>Prosecutors accused Herold Felton's boss, Phillip Numrich, of not doing enough to protect his workers.</p> <p>Numrich was charged with reckless endangerment, making him the first employer in the state to be criminally charged in the death of a worker.</p> <p>“His overconfidence, lack of forethought, and crass management resulted in the untimely death of my husband,” Jenna Felton said.</p> <p>Following a plea deal, a judge sentenced Numrich to 45 days in jail.</p> <p>Herold's loved ones said the penalty was not enough.</p>

	<p>“With all due respect, Judge Diaz, I rise up and I speak out today to say, we don’t agree with this arrangement,” Jenna Felton said in court.</p> <p>“Damage a tree at a construction site on Yesler Avenue and you pay \$36,800. Kill a worker in Washington and the usual fine is less than \$5,000,” said Jay Herzmark with SafeWork Washington.</p> <p>Despite the wishes of Herold’s family, the judge said there was little that could be done given the plea deal.</p> <p>As Numrich heads to a jail cell, prosecutors insist other employers could soon find themselves in similar situations.</p> <p>“These cases are where elder abuse was 10 years ago and they are where domestic violence was 40 or 50 years ago,” said the family’s attorney.</p> <p>As part of Friday’s ruling, Numrich is banned from construction sites.</p>
Return to Top	

HEADLINE	03/04 Seattle leaders pledge arrests, prosecution
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/seattle-leaders-emphasize-arrests-prosecution-plan-clean-up-downtown/SUF2PFZPYFCMJHRJGALIMBCFIA/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — There was a show of determination from Seattle-area leaders Friday, and a promise to crack down on crime in the city.</p> <p>From local to federal law enforcement as well as prosecutors, leaders sent a unified message during a press conference, laying out the first steps to restore safety.</p> <p>It comes after a sharp uptick in gun violence last year, with one hotspot being the downtown core near Third Avenue and Pine Street.</p> <p>One immediate difference people will notice is more police downtown. But downtown residents and business owners are skeptical about long-term change, saying it seems like things often improve for a week after a major crime like a homicide, before things return to the troubled normal</p> <p>“I’ve seen it like 10 times in the last four to five weeks and it all goes back to the same. I don’t know how long it’ll be this time but I expect to see it back,” said Brandon Davis, a business owner in downtown Seattle.</p> <p>But this time, from police to prosecutors to the DEA, everyone is pledging they’re on the same page and are working together to restore safety in Seattle.</p> <p>“We are out of control in terms of a city,” said Mayor Bruce Harrell.</p> <p>City leaders are calling the new plan to start fixing public safety in Seattle “Operation New Day.”</p> <p>“Making sure we enforce our laws, but also we enforce it with compassion and caring,” Harrell said.</p> <p>The latest violent crimes include two murders this week near Third Avenue and Pine Street, a stabbing Friday morning at Fourth and Pine, and a stabbing this morning.</p> <p>It comes as businesses have already been rapidly exiting downtown, citing safety concerns and bringing more vacant storefronts and boarded-up windows.</p>

“The people doing the shooting are the same people who are loitering, urinating on the street, selling drugs. These crimes are out in the open — they’re visible to all who come to Third Ave and Pike Street,” David said. “I don’t understand why we have police if they’re not allowed to do their job,” he said.

Now in a show of unity between local and federal law enforcement and prosecutors, leaders are promising that things are changing. More arrests and prosecution was emphasized on Friday, while adding that simply arresting and prosecuting will not solve Seattle’s crime problem.

“Making sure we enforce our laws, but also we enforce it with compassion and caring,” Harrell said

“I have directed priority to prosecute dozens of crimes at Third Avenue in order to disrupt and deter the open-air drug market and fencing activity that has a hold in our downtown,” said Seattle City Attorney Ann Davison. The city attorney’s office handles misdemeanor crime.

The Seattle police chief said the police have arrested about 120 people just from 12th and Jackson, a crime hot spot that brought out a mobile precinct last month.

The chief admits many of the criminals are back out on the streets.

“We know they have been arrested, booked into jail, and we know many of them have been released. Some have been released and already re-arrested. So that is one of the challenges we are facing,” Diaz said. He said they are also working with the jail and judges to address the issue.

So far 10 people have been charged with felonies — three of them federal cases involving both guns and drugs. Dozens of other felony cases are still being investigated.

The DEA and Seattle mayor say another challenge is the increase in volume of fentanyl and people addicted to drugs. The city is also working on expanding services.

Frank Tarentino III, the special agent in charge at DEA Seattle, says Mexican cartels are pushing fentanyl-laced pills into Seattle.

“Last year Seattle DEA seized enough fentanyl to kill everyone in Washington,” Tarentino said. “Drug trafficking and gun violence directly linked. That’s causing the most harm in our communities,” he said.

“The number of addictions and criminal behavior influenced by the drug issue has increased. That’s why we’re not going out there with arrest, arrest, arrest. This is a health crisis. ... Making sure we enforce our laws, but also we enforce it with compassion and caring,” Harrell said.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Returning workers help w/crime concerns?
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/workers-returning-to-downtown-seattle-office-towers-could-help-with-crime-concerns
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Downtown office workers could play a role in Seattle's push to curb crime in the city's central business district, some observers say.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic emptied Seattle's office towers and opened the door for criminal activity, which has turned deadly in recent days. Getting business owners to bring those workers back could give police a resource they've been lacking in the downtown core.</p> <p>“It's pretty dead in there,” said worker Alex Brogger as he left work for the day Friday evening from inside the Columbia Center.</p> <p>Seattle police launched an around-the-clock presence at 3rd Ave. and Pine Street, one of the city’s most troubled street corners even as the skyscrapers that loom overhead still remain mostly empty.</p>

A hundred people used to work on Brogger's floor, but on Friday he was just one of three employees on site in the tower.

"My floor, our office, we let people come use it if they want to," Brogger said. "But we're not encouraging people back yet."

Officials said workers returning to the downtown core could help with crime in the central core.

Rod Kauffman, of Building Owners and Managers Association Seattle King County, said downtown office towers are only about 20 percent full, and many business owners are still holding off on bringing workers back in part because of crime.

"There are certain parts of town, especially from the waterfront on up to 3rd Ave., where it may not grow as fast until some of the public safety issues have actually seen improvement," said Kauffman, whose firm manages commercial real estate.

Getting those offices filled will give a resurgence to the street-level shops and restaurants and that can mean more people will be around to potentially report criminal activity.

"If there were more people around then I think criminals would feel less brazen," Brogger said.

In the meantime, Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell has a new public safety strategy he announced on Friday that focuses on hot spot policing, disrupting crime networks, deterrence and urban blight abatement.

Having workers return to their offices could add an extra edge.

"Improving street safety, public safety, and more people downtown will work together to bring our streets back toward what we need," Kauffman said.

Currently the mayor and police are focused on 3rd Ave. and Pine Street as well as 12th Ave. and Jackson Street but said other high-crime areas are also on the list.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Gov signs bills clarifying police reform laws
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/inslee-signs-bills-clarifying-police-reform-laws-in-washington
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. - Washington Gov. Jay Inslee on Friday signed two bills fixing parts of a sweeping package of police reform measures that lawmakers passed in the wake of 2020s widespread racial justice protests.</p> <p>One of the newly signed bills makes clear officers may use force to help detain or transport people in behavioral health crisis, while the other fixes an oversight that seemed to inadvertently prohibit police departments from possessing certain less-lethal weapons.</p> <p>"When we take steps forward we learn and we improve," Inslee said. "I'm glad legislators have had an open mind to listen to what is happening in the field and respond."</p> <p>The Legislature in 2021 approved the nation's most ambitious package of police reform and accountability measures following the murder of George Floyd, a Black man, by Minneapolis police and the protests that ensued.</p> <p>They included House Bill 1310, saying officers could use force only when they had probable cause to make an arrest or to prevent imminent injury, and that they were required to use appropriate de-escalation tactics if possible.</p>

Departments across the state said those restrictions left unclear whether officers could use force in certain noncriminal situations, such as to detain people in crisis or transport them for behavioral health evaluation or treatment.

As a result, the law [backfired on some of the state's most vulnerable residents](#). Many police departments declined to use force to transport people in crisis, and it made it more difficult for mental health professionals to get them help.

Inslee on Friday signed [House Bill 1735](#), which makes clear that the Legislature never intended to stop police from using force in community caretaking situations. It also says officers can use force to execute search warrants and to take minors into protective custody.

Officers are still required to exercise reasonable care and appropriate de-escalation tactics before using force.

"This bill strikes a balance between necessary police reform and ensuring that officers can still help people in crisis," Inslee said.

The other measure fixes a mistake in another bill that was passed as part of the 2021 police reform package. That one restricted police departments from having certain military equipment, including firearms of greater than .50 caliber. That inadvertently banned some bean-bag shotguns or other less-lethal weapons.

The attorney general's office issued an analysis last year saying that the measure clearly was not directed at less-lethal weapons and that departments could continue using them.

Nevertheless, some departments put the weapons away pending clarification by the Legislature. Both bills passed the Senate unanimously after previously being passed by the House.

[Return to Top](#)

HEADLINE	03/04 Seattle mayor: efforts address crime, safety
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/seattle-mayor-law-enforcement-announce-efforts-to-address-crime
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - In response to recent centralized crime in Seattle, particularly at notorious problem spot Third Avenue and Pine/Pike Street, Seattle mayor Bruce Harrell met with local, regional and federal law enforcement leaders to discuss efforts underway to address crime and public safety.</p> <p>In 2022, there have been several shootings in the area of Third Avenue and Pine/Pike Street. In the last week, two of the shootings were fatal and happened days apart.</p> <p>During a press briefing on Friday, Harrell announced that there would be a mobile SPD precinct at 3rd Avenue/Pine Street, as well as six dedicated officers-- at minimum-- to that location with additional patrol support from SPD and King County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>Harrell also said investigative operations on firearm possessions in that area will continue.</p> <p>"Drug trafficking and gun violence are directly linked and responsible for causing the most harm in our community. Our strategic and targeted enforcement is designed to remove those responsible for fueling the opioid epidemic and associated violence," said Frank A. Tarentino, Special Agent in Charge of the DEA Seattle Field Division. "We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to reduce drug-related violence and target the criminal drug networks who are supplying the lethal fentanyl-laced pills to the most vulnerable on the streets of Seattle."</p> <p>While Harrell said the city would be cracking down on arrests, he also stressed that the city would be working with community-based organizations to get people in that area the help they may need.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The Seattle Police Department is increasing their patrols on Third Avenue in Downtown in response to the recent violent crimes.</p> <p>Harrell also touted the results of an undercover operation called Operation New Day at 12th Avenue S. and S. Jackson Street in the Chinatown-International District.</p> <p>Under the operation, Seattle police have made 16 felony arrests primarily related to crime at Little Saigon since Jan. 21. Dealers of fentanyl and other drugs, including those carrying illegal firearms, were arrested through undercover police work and targeted investigations carried out over the first several weeks of the year.</p> <p>Dozens of felonies and more than 100 charges have been filed as part of overall and ongoing Seattle Police operations around 12th Avenue South and South Jackson Street and cases linked to that area, the mayor's office said.</p> <p>"Too many small business owners, commuters, and visitors to downtown feel unsafe in the heart of our City, because people who participate in what has become an open-air drug market are not receiving significant or effective intervention of their criminal activity," said City Attorney Ann Davison.</p> <p>"As I have done with referrals from 12th and Jackson, I will continue to prioritize Seattle Police Department referrals from high-crime areas such as Third Avenue. These arrests and prosecutions will help to disrupt this cycle of addiction, theft, drug sales, and human suffering. We stand ready to partner with the Mayor's Office, the Seattle Police Department, and community partners to help make downtown Seattle a safe place for residents, businesses, and everyone who visits our city."</p>
-------------------------------	---

HEADLINE	03/04 Businesses: need long term crime solution
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/there-is-still-a-lot-of-work-to-do-business-owners-react-to-seattles-crime-crackdown-plan
GIST	<p>SEATTLE - The issue of violence in Seattle is not new, but the last month has been especially violent and mom-and-pop shops are the ones that have been hit the hardest by the rise in crime.</p> <p>Some small businesses are shutting their doors until something is done.</p> <p>While city leaders have announced their new plan to combat the problem, business owners say this is a great first step -- but it's just that - a step.</p> <p>They say a substation in the heart of downtown would not only make them feel safer, but tourists as well.</p> <p>"I don't feel that I'm safe," said Tracy Peach, who came into town for a comedy show.</p> <p>She said as she walked up to the restaurant where she and her sister would have dinner, she came across several encampments and transients doing drugs out in the open.</p> <p>"A lot of vandalism and destruction and drug use," said Damayne Dash, who works on 3rd Avenue.</p> <p>To help combat the growing issue of violence at Third Avenue and Pike/Pine Streets, Seattle Police placed a mobile precinct in the area, making their presence very visible as they patrol the streets on bike and foot.</p> <p>The Seattle Police Department is increasing their patrols on Third Avenue in Downtown in response to the recent violent crimes.</p> <p>But will their presence put an end to this hotspot?</p> <p>"I hope so, I definitely hope so. And so far, it seems like it's doing a good job," Dash said.</p>

"I don't feel that just by having the police presence here is going to stop anything that would be occurring anyway," Peach said.

Pamela Morales, owner of Simple Life on 2nd Avenue, says this is a great first step.

The boutique has been in business for 25 years now, but like many business owners, she's down profit due to shoplifting, encampments popping up and transients making a home outside her store.

Morales says all she and other business owners can do is wait and see what the results are but [having a patrol officer outside her business](#) is making her feel safer.

Olga Sagan, owner of Pirosky Pirosky, [closed her doors earlier this week due to the rise in crime](#).

"I'm very upset that it took two deaths within three days to have us go in the right direction," Sagan said.

While she says today was the first time, she felt safe walking the area she says it's going to take consistent, long-term, sustainable and humane solutions to combat every issue downtown Seattle is facing before she opens up shop again.

"There is still a lot of work to do. The best thing I heard is it's just not policing and having more police presence, it's about encompassing approach, long-term approach to the issues we're having," Sagan said.

Business owners are calling on city leaders to establish long term solutions.

They say they're hopeful things will shape up before they're forced to close for good; between these new incentives, spring just around the corner and an increase in tourism, sales will be up -- boosting our local economy.

[Return to Top](#)

Information From Online Communities and Unclassified Sources/InFOCUS is a situational awareness report published daily by the Washington State Fusion Center.

If you no longer wish to receive this report, please submit an email to intake@wsfc.wa.gov and enter UNSUBSCRIBE InFOCUS in the Subject line.

DISCLAIMER - the articles highlighted within InFOCUS is for informational purposes only and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Washington State Fusion Center, the City of Seattle, the Seattle Police Department or the Washington State Patrol and have been included only for ease of reference and academic purposes.

FAIR USE Notice All rights to these copyrighted items are reserved. Articles and graphics have been placed within for educational and discussion purposes only, in compliance with 'Fair Use' criteria established in Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976. The principle of 'Fair Use' was established as law by Section 107 of The Copyright Act of 1976. 'Fair Use' legally eliminates the need to obtain permission or pay royalties for the use of previously copyrighted materials if the purposes of display include 'criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research.' Section 107 establishes four criteria for determining whether the use of a work in any particular case qualifies as a 'fair use'. A work used does not necessarily have to satisfy all four criteria to qualify as an instance of 'fair use'. Rather, 'fair use' is determined by the overall extent to which the cited work does or does not substantially satisfy the criteria in their totality. If you wish to use copyrighted

material for purposes of your own that go beyond 'fair use,' you must obtain permission from the copyright owner. For more information go to: [≤http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>](http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml)

THIS DOCUMENT MAY CONTAIN COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL. COPYING AND DISSEMINATION IS PROHIBITED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNERS.

Source: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>

[Return to Top](#)